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CHARLES·G·D·ROBERTS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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HOOF AND CLAW

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

The House in the Water.
The Backwoodsmen.
Kings in Exile.
Neighbours Unknown.
More Kindred of the Wild.
The Feet of the Furtive.

HOOF AND CLAW

By

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS

Author of "The Feet of the Furtive," "Kings in Exile" etc

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PAUL BRANSOM

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The Bear that thought he was a Dog

THE gaunt, black mother lifted her head from nuzzling happily at the velvet fur of her little one. The cub was but twenty-four hours old, and engrossed every emotion of her savage heart; but her ear had caught the sound of heavy footsteps coming up the mountain. They were confident, fearless footsteps, taking no care whatever to disguise themselves, so she knew at once that they were the steps of the only creature that presumed to go so noisily through the great silences. Her heart pounded with anxious suspicion. She gave the cub a reassuring lick, deftly set it aside with her great paws, and thrust her head forth cautiously from the door of the den.

She saw a man—a woodsman in brownish-grey homespuns and heavy leg-boots, and with a gun over his shoulder—slouching up along the faintly marked trail which led

close past her doorway. Her own great tracks on the trail had been obliterated that morning by a soft and thawing fall of belated spring snow—"the robin snow," as it is called in New Brunswick—and the man, absorbed in picking his way by this unfamiliar route over the mountain, had no suspicion that he was in danger of trespassing. But the bear, with that tiny black form at the bottom of the den filling her whole horizon, could not conceive that the man's approach had any other purpose than to rob her of her treasure. She ran back to the little one, nosed it gently into a corner, and anxiously pawed some dry leaves half over it. Then, her eyes aflame with rage and fear, she betook herself once more to the entrance, and crouched there motionless to await the coming of the enemy.

The man swung up the hill noisily, grunting now and again as his foothold slipped on the slushy, moss-covered stones. He fetched a huge breath of satisfaction as he gained a little strip of level ledge, perhaps a dozen feet in length, with a scrubby spruce bush growing at the other end of it. Behind the bush he made out what looked as if it might

be the entrance to a little cave Interested at once, he strode forward to examine it. At the first stride a towering black form, jaws agape and claws outstretched, crashed past the fir bush and hurled itself upon him.

A man brought up in the backwoods learns to think quickly, or, rather, to think and act in the same instant. Even as the great beast sprang, the man's gun leaped to its place and he fired. His charge was nothing more than heavy duck-shot, intended for some low-flying flock of migrant geese or brant. But at this close range, some seven or eight feet only, it tore through its target like a heavy mushroom bullet, and with a stopping force that halted the animal's charge in mid-air like the blow of a steam hammer. She fell in her tracks, a heap of huddled fur and grinning teeth.

"Gee," remarked the man, "that was a close call!" He ejected the empty shell and slipped in a fresh cartridge. Then he examined critically the warm heap of fur and teeth.

Perceiving that his victim was a mother, and also that her fur was rusty and ragged after the winter's sleep, sentiment and the

sound utilitarianism of the backwoods stirred within him in a fine blend.

"Poor old beggar!" he muttered. "She must hev' a baby in yonder hole. That accounts fer her kind of hasty ways. 'Most a pity I had to shoot her jest now, when she's out o' season an' her pelt not worth the job of strippin' it!"

Entering the half darkness of the cave, he quickly discovered the cub in its ineffectual hiding-place. Young as it was, when he picked it up, it whimpered with terror and struck out with its baby paws, recognizing the smell of an enemy. The man grinned indulgently at this display of spirit.

"Gee, but ye're chock-full o' ginger!" said he. And then, being of an understanding heart and an experimental turn of mind, he laid the cub down and returned to the body of the mother. With his knife he cut off several big handfuls of the shaggy fur and stuffed it into his pockets. Then he rubbed his hands, his sleeves, and the breast of his coat on the warm body.

"There, now," said he, returning to the cave and once more picking up the little one, "I've made ye an orphant, to be sure, but

I'm goin' to soothe yer feelin's all I kin. Ye must make believe as how I'm yer mammy till I kin find ye a better one."

Pillowed in the crook of his captor's arm, and with his nose snuggled into a bunch of his mother's fur, the cub ceased to wonder at a problem too hard for him, and dozed off into an uneasy sleep. And the man, pleased with his new plaything, went gently that he might not disturb the slumber.

Now, it chanced that at Jabe Smith's farm, on the other side of the mountain, there had just been a humble tragedy. Jabe Smith's dog, a long-haired brown retriever, had been bereaved of her new-born puppies. Six of them she had borne, but five had been straightway taken from her and drowned; for Jabe, though compassionate of heart, had wisely decided that compassion would be too costly at the price of having his little clearing quite overrun with dogs. For two days, in her box in a corner of the dusky stable, the brown mother had wistfully poured out her tenderness upon the one remaining puppy; and then, when she had run into the house for a moment to snatch a bite of breakfast, one of Smith's big red

oxen had strolled into the stable and blundered a great splay hoof into the box. That had happened in the morning; and all day the brown mother had moped, whimpering and whining, about the stable, casting long distraught glances at the box in the corner, which she was unwilling either to approach or to quite forsake.

When her master returned, and came and looked in hesitatingly at the stable door, the brown mother saw the small furry shape in the crook of his arm. Her heart yearned to it at once. She fawned upon the man coaxingly, lifted herself with her forepaws upon his coat, and reached up till she could lick the sleeping cub. Somewhat puzzled, Jabe Smith went and looked into the box. Then he understood.

"If you want the cub, Jinny, he's your'n all right. An' it saves me a heap o' bother."

II

Driven by his hunger, and reassured by the smell of the handful of fur which the woodsman left with him, the cub promptly accepted his adoption. She seemed very

small, this new mother, and she had a disquieting odour; but the supreme thing, in the cub's eyes, was the fact she had something that assuaged his appetite. The flavour, to be sure, was something new, and novelty is a poor recommendation to babes of whatever kindred; but all the cub really asked of milk was that it should be warm and abundant. And soon, being assiduously licked and fondled, and nursed till his little belly was round as a melon, he forgot the cave on the mountain-side and accepted Jabe Smith's barn as a quite normal abode for small bears.

Jinny was natively a good mother. Had her own pups been left to her, she would have lavished every care and tenderness upon them during the allotted span of weeks, and then, with inexorable decision, she would have weaned and put them away for their souls' good. But somewhere in her sturdy doggish make-up there was a touch of temperament, of something almost approaching imagination, to which this strange foster-child of hers appealed as no ordinary puppy could ever have done. She loved the cub with a certain extravagance, and gave herself up

to it utterly. Even her beloved master fell into a secondary place, and his household, of which she had hitherto held herself the guardian, now seemed to her to exist merely for the benefit of this black prodigy which she imagined herself to have produced. The little one's astounding growth—for the cubs of the bear are born very small, and so must lose no time in making up arrears of stature —was an affair for which she took all credit to herself; and she never thought of weaning him till he himself decided the matter by preferring the solid dainties of the kitchen. When she could no longer nurse him, however, she remained his devoted comrade, playmate, satellite; and the cub, who was a roguish but amiable soul, repaid her devotion by imitating her in all ways possible. The bear being by nature a very silent animal, her noisy barking seemed always to stir his curiosity and admiration; but his attempts to imitate it resulted in nothing more than an occasional grunting *woof*. This throaty syllable, his only utterance besides the whimper which signalled the frequent demands of his appetite, came to be accepted as his name; and he speedily learned to respond to it.

Jabe Smith, as has been already pointed out, was a man of sympathetic discernment. In the course of no long time his discernment told him that Woof was growing up under the delusion that he was a dog. It was perhaps a convenience, in some ways, that he should not know he was a bear—he might be the more secure from troublesome ancestral suggestions. But as he appeared to claim all the privileges of his foster-mother, Jabe Smith's foreseeing eye considered the time, not far distant, when the sturdy and demonstrative little animal would grow to a giant of six or seven hundred pounds in weight, and still, no doubt, continue to think he was a dog. Jabe Smith began to discourage the demonstrativeness of Jinny, trusting her example would have the desired effect upon the cub. In particular, he set himself to remove from her mind any lingering notion that she would do for a lap-dog. He did not want any such notion as that to get itself established in Woof's young brain. Also, he broke poor Jinny at once of her affectionate habit of springing up and planting her fore-paws upon his breast. That seemed to him a demonstration of ardour which, if practised

by a seven-hundred-pound bear, might be a little overwhelming.

Jabe Smith had no children to complicate the situation. His family consisted merely of Mrs. Smith, a small but varying number of cats and kittens, Jinny, and Woof. Upon Mrs. Smith and the cats Woof's delusion came to have such effect that they, too, regarded him as a dog. The cats scratched him when he was little, and with equal confidence they scratched him when he was big. Mrs. Smith, as long as she was in a good humour, allowed him the freedom of the house, coddled him with kitchen tit-bits, and laughed when his affectionate but awkward bulk got in the way of her outbursts of mopping or her paroxysms of sweeping. But when storm was in the air, she regarded him no more than a black poodle. At the heels of the more nimble Jinny, he would be chased in ignominy from the kitchen door, with Mrs. Jabe's angry broom thwacking at the spot where Nature had forgotten to give him a tail. At such time Jabe Smith was usually to be seen smoking contemplatively on the wood-pile, and regarding the abashed fugitives with sympathy.

This matter of a tail was one of the obstacles which Woof had to encounter in playing the part of a dog. He was indefatigable in his efforts to wag his tail. Finding no tail to wag, he did the best he could with his whole massive hindquarters, to the discomfiture of all that got in the way. Yet, for all his clumsiness, his good-will was so unchanging that none of the farmyard kindreds had any dread of him, saving only the pig in his sty. The pig, being an incurable sceptic by nature, and, moreover, possessed of a keen and discriminating nose, persisted in believing him to be a bear and a lover of pork, and would squeal nervously at the sight of him. The rest of the farmyard folk accepted him at his own illusion, and appeared to regard him as a gigantic species of dog. And so, with nothing to mar his content but the occasional paroxysms of Mrs. Jabe's broom, Woof led the sheltered life and was glad to be a dog.

III

It was not until the autumn of his third year that Woof began to experience any discontent. Then, without knowing why, it seemed to him that there was something

lacking in Jabe Smith's farmyard—even in Jabe Smith himself and in Jinny, his foster-mother. The smell of the deep woods beyond the pasture fields drew him strangely. He grew restless. Something called to him ; something stirred in his blood and would not let him be still. And one morning, when Jabe Smith came out in the first pink and amber of daybreak to fodder the horses, he found that Woof had disappeared. He was sorry, but he was not surprised. He tried to explain to the dejected Jinny that they would probably have the truant back again before long. But he was no adept in the language of dogs, and Jinny, failing for once to understand, remained disconsolate.

Once clear of the outermost stump pastures and burnt-lands, Woof pushed on feverishly. The urge that drove him forward directed him toward the half-barren, rounded shoulders of old Sugar Loaf, where the blue-berries at this season were ripe and bursting with juice. Here in the gold-green, windy open, belly-deep in the low, blue-jewelled bushes, Woof feasted greedily; but he felt it was not berries that he had come for.

When, however, he came upon a glossy

young she-bear, her fine black muzzle bedaubed with berry juice, his eyes were opened to the object of his quest. Perhaps he thought she, too, was a dog; but, if so, she was in his eyes a dog of incomparable charm, more dear to him, though a new acquaintance, than even little brown Jinny, his kind mother, had ever been. The stranger, though at first somewhat puzzled by Woof's violent efforts to wag a non-existent tail, apparently found her big wooer sympathetic. For the next few weeks, all through the golden, dreamy autumn of the New Brunswick woods, the two roamed together; and for the time Woof forgot the farm, his master, Jinny, and even Mrs. Jabe's impetuous broom.

But about the time of the first sharp frosts, when the ground was crisp with the new-fallen leaves, Woof and his mate began to lose interest in each other. She amiably forgot him and wandered off by herself, intent on nothing so much as satisfying her appetite, which had increased amazingly. It was necessary that she should load her ribs with fat to last her through her long winter's sleep in some cave or hollow tree. And as

for Woof, once more he thought of Jabe Smith and Jinny, and the kind, familiar farmyard, and the delectable scraps from the kitchen, and the comforting smell of fried pancakes. What was the chill and lonely wilderness to him, a dog? He turned from grubbing up an ant stump and headed straight back for home.

When he got there, he found but a chimney standing naked and blackened over a tangle of charred ruins. A forest fire, some ten days back, had swept past that way, cutting a mile-wide swathe through the woods and clean wiping out Jabe Smith's little homestead. It being too late in the year to begin rebuilding, the woodsman had betaken himself to the Settlements for the winter, trusting to begin, in the spring, the slow repair of his fortunes.

Woof could not understand it at all. For a day he wandered disconsolately over and about the ruins, whining and sniffing, and filled with a sense of injury at being thus deserted. How glad he would have been to hear even the squeal of his enemy, the pig, or to feel the impetuous broom of Mrs. Jabe harassing his haunches! But even such

poor consolation seemed to have passed beyond his ken. On the second day, being very hungry, he gave up all hope of bacon scraps, and set off to the woods to forage once more for himself.

As long as the actual winter held off, there was no great difficulty in this foraging. There were roots to be grubbed up, grubs, worms, and beetles, already sluggish with the cold, to be found under stones and logs, and ant-hills to be ravished. There were also the nests of bees and wasps, pungent but savoury. He was an expert in hunting the shy wood-mice, lying patiently in wait for them beside their holes and obliterating them, as they came out, with a lightning stroke of his great paw. But when the hard frosts came, sealing up the moist turf under a crust of steel, and the snows, burying the mouse-holes under three or four feet of white fluff, then he was hard put to it for a living. Every day or two, in his distress, he would revisit the clearing and wander sorrowfully among the snow-clad ruins, hoping against hope that his vanished friends would presently return.

It was in one of the earliest of these melan-

choly visits that Woof first encountered a male of his own species, and showed how far he was from any consciousness of kinship. A yearling heifer of Jabe Smith's, which had escaped from the fire and fled far into the wilderness, chanced to find her way back. For several weeks she had managed to keep alive on such dead grass as she could paw down to through the snow, and on such twigs of birch and poplar as she could manage to chew. Now, a mere ragged bag of bones, she stood in the snow behind the ruins, her eyes wild with hunger and despair.

Her piteous mooings caught the ear of a hungry old he-bear which was hunting in the woods near by. He came at once, hopefully. One stroke of his armed paw on the unhappy heifer's neck put a period to her pains, and the savage old prowler fell to his meal.

But, as it chanced, Woof also had heard, from a little further off, that lowing of the disconsolate heifer. To him it had come as a voice from the good old days of friendliness and plenty and impetuous brooms, and he had hastened toward the sound

with new hope in his heart. He came just in time to see, from the edge of the clearing, the victim stricken down.

One lesson Woof had well learned from his foster-mother, and that was the obligation resting upon every honest dog to protect his master's property. The unfortunate heifer was undoubtedly the property of Jabe Smith. In fact, Woof knew her as a young beast who had often shaken her budding horns at him. Filled with righteous wrath, he rushed forward and hurled himself upon the slayer.

The latter was one of those morose old males, who, having forgotten or outgrown the comfortable custom of hibernation, are doomed to range the wilderness all winter. His temper, therefore, was raw enough in any case. At this flagrant interference with his own lawful kill, it flared to fury. His assailant was bigger than he, better nourished, and far stronger; but for some minutes he put up a fight which, for swift ferocity, almost daunted the hitherto unawakened spirit of Woof. A glancing blow of the stranger's, however, on the side of Woof's snout—only the remnant of a spent stroke,

but enough to produce an effect on that most sensitive centre of a bear's dignity—and there was a sudden change in the conditions of the duel. Woof, for the first time in his life, saw red. It was a veritable berserk rage, this virgin outburst of his. His adversary simply went down like a rag baby before it, and was mauled to abject submission, in the smother of the snow, inside of half a minute. Feigning death, which, indeed, was no great feigning for him at that moment, he succeeded in deceiving the unsophisticated Woof, who drew back upon his haunches to consider his triumph. In that second the vanquished one writhed nimbly to his feet and slipped off apologetically though the snow. And Woof, placated by his victory, made no attempt to follow. The ignominies of Mrs. Jabe's broom were wiped out.

When Woof's elation had somewhat subsided, he laid himself down beside the carcass of the dead heifer. As the wind blew on that day, this corner of the ruins was a nook of shelter. Moreover, the body of the red heifer, dead and dilapidated though it was, formed in his mind a link with the

happy past. It was Jabe Smith's property, and he got a certain comfort from lying beside it and guarding it for his master. As the day wore on, and his appetite grew more and more insistent, in an absent-minded way be began to gnaw at the good red meat beside him. At first, to be sure, this gave him a guilty conscience, and from time to time he would glance up nervously, as if apprehending the broom. But soon immunity brought confidence, his conscience ceased to trouble him, and the comfort derived from the nearness of the red heifer was increased exceedingly.

As long as the heifer lasted, Woof stuck faithfully to his post as guardian, and longer, indeed. For nearly two days after the remains had quite disappeared—save for horns and hoofs and such bones as his jaws could not crush—he lingered. Then at last, urged by a ruthless hunger, and sorrowfully convinced that there was nothing more he could do for Jabe or Jabe for him, he set off again on his wanderings.

About three weeks later, forlorn of heart and exigent of belly, Woof found himself in a part of the forest where he had never been

before. But some one else had been there; before him was a broad trail, just such as Jabe Smith and his wood sled used to make. Here were the prints of horses' hooves. Woof's heart bounded hopefully. He hurried along down the trail. Then a faint, delectable savour, drawn across the sharp, still air, met his nostrils. Pork and beans —oh, assuredly! He paused for a second to sniff the fragrance again, and then lurched onwards at a rolling gallop. He rounded a turn of the trail, and there before him stood a logging camp.

To Woof a human habitation stood for friendliness and food and shelter. He approached, therefore, without hesitation.

There was no sign of life about the place, except for the smoke rising liberally from the stove-pipe chimney. The door was shut, but Woof knew that doors frequently opened if one scratched at them and whined persuasively. He tried it, then stopped to listen for an answer. The answer came—a heavy, comfortable snore from within the cabin. It was mid-morning, and the camp cook, having got his work done up, was sleeping in his bunk the while the dinner was boiling.

Woof scratched and whined again. Then, growing impatient, he reared himself on his haunches in order to scratch with both paws at once. His luck favoured him, for he happened to scratch on the latch. It lifted, the door swung open suddenly, and he half fell across the threshold. He had not intended so abrupt an entrance, and he paused, peering with diffidence and hope into the homely gloom.

The snoring had stopped suddenly. At the rear of the cabin Woof made out a large, round, startled face, fringed with scanty red whiskers and a mop of red hair, staring at him from over the edge of an upper bunk. Woof had hoped to find Jabe Smith there. But this was a stranger, so he suppressed his impulse to rush in and wallow delightedly before the bunk. Instead of that, he came only half-way over the threshold, and stood there making those violent contortions which he believed to be wagging his tail.

To a cool observer of even the most limited intelligence it would have been clear that these contortions were intended to be conciliatory. But the cook of Conroy's Camp was taken by surprise, and he was not

a cool observer—in fact, he was frightened. A gun was leaning against the wall below the bunk. A large, hairy hand stole forth, reached down and clutched the gun.

Woof wagged his haunches more coaxingly than ever, and took another hopeful step forward. Up went the gun. There was a blue-white spurt, and the report clashed deafeningly within the narrow quarters.

The cook was a poor shot at any time, and at this moment he was at a special disadvantage. The bullet went close over the top of Woof's head and sang waspishly across the clearing. Woof turned and looked over his shoulder to see what the man had fired at. If anything was hit, he wanted to go and get it and fetch it for the man, as Jabe and Jinny had taught him to do. But he could see no result of the shot. He whined deprecatingly and ventured all the way into the cabin.

The cook felt desperately for another cartridge. There was none to be found. He remembered that they were all in the chest by the door. He crouched back in the bunk, making himself as small as possible, and hoping that a certain hunk of bacon on the

bench by the stove might divert the terrible stranger's attention and give him a chance to make a bolt for the door.

But Woof had not forgotten either the good example of Jinny or the discipline of Mrs. Jabe's broom. Far be it from him to help himself without leave. But he was very hungry. Something must be done to win the favour of the strangely unresponsive round-faced man in the bunk. Looking about him anxiously, he espied a pair of greasy cowhide "larrigans" lying on the floor near the door. Picking one up in his mouth, after the manner of his retriever foster-mother, he carried it over and laid it down, as a humble offering, beside the bunk.

Now, the cook, though he had been undeniably frightened, was by no means a fool. This touching gift of one of his own larrigans opened his eyes and his heart. Such a bear, he was assured, could harbour no evil intentions. He sat up in his bunk.

"Hullo!" said he. "What ye doin' here, sonny? What d'ye want o' me, anyhow?"

The huge black beast wagged his hindquarters frantically and wallowed on the

floor in his fawning delight at the sound of a human voice.

"Seems to think he's a kind of a dawg," muttered the cook thoughtfully. And then the light of certain remembered rumours broke upon his memory.

"I'll be jiggered," said he, "ef 'tain't that there tame b'ar Jabe Smith, over to East Fork, used to have afore he was burnt out!"

Climbing confidently from the bunk, he proceeded to pour a generous portion of molasses over the contents of the scrap pail, because he knew that bears had a sweet tooth. When the choppers and drivers came trooping in for dinner, they were somewhat taken aback to find a huge bear sleeping beside the stove. As the dangerous-looking slumberer seemed to be in the way—none of the men caring to sit too close to him—to their amazement the cook smacked the mighty hindquarters with the flat of his hand, and bundled him unceremoniously into a corner. "'Pears to think he's some kind of a dawg," explained the cook, "so I let him come along in for company. He'll fetch yer larrigans an' socks an' things fer ye. An' it makes

the camp a sight homier, havin' somethin' like a cat or a dawg about."

"Right you are!" agreed the boss. "But what was that noise we heard, along about an hour back? Did you shoot anything?"

"Oh, that was jest a little misunderstandin', before him an' me got acquainted," explained the cook, with a trace of embarrassment. "We made it up all right."

The Trail of the Vanishing Herds

ONCE again, but sluggishly, as if oppressed by apprehensions which they could not understand, the humped and lion-fronted herds of the bison began to gather for the immemorial southward drift. Harassed of late years by new and terrible enemies, their herds had been so thinned and scattered that even to the heavy brains of the fiercer old bulls a vague idea of caution was beginning to penetrate. Hitherto it had been the wont of the colossal hordes to deal with their adversaries in a very direct and simple fashion —to charge and thunder down upon them, to roll over them in an irresistible flood of angry hooves, and trample them out of existence. Against the ancient enemies this straightforward method of warfare had been efficacious enough, and the herds had multiplied till the plains were black with their marching myriads. But against the new

foe—the white man, with his guns and his cunning, his cool courage and his insatiable greed—it had been a destructive failure. The mightier their myriads, the more irresistible the invitation to this relentless slaughterer; and they had melted before him. At last a new instinct had begun to stir in their crude intelligences, an instinct to scatter, to shun the old, well-worn trails of migration, to seek pasturage in the remoter valleys and by small streams where the white man's foot had not yet trespassed. But as yet it was no more than the suggestion of an instinct, too feeble and fumbling to sway the obstinate hordes. It had come to birth too late. Here and there a little troop—perhaps half a dozen cows under the lordship of some shaggy bull more alert and supple-witted than his fellows—resisted the summons to assemble, and slipped off among the wooded glades. But the rest, uneasy, yet uncomprehending, obeyed the ancestral impulse and gathered till the northern plains were black with them.

Then the great march began, the fateful southward drift.

The horde of the giant migrants was not

a homogeneous mass, as it would have seemed to one viewing it from a distance and a height. It was made up of innumerable small herds, from a dozen to thirty or forty bison in each. Each of these little groups hung together tenaciously, under the dominance of two or three old bulls, and kept at a certain distance, narrow but appreciable, from the herds immediately neighbouring it. But all the herds drifted southward together in full accord, now journeying, now halting, now moving again, as if organized and ordered by some one central and inflexible control. Rival bulls roared their challenges, pawed the earth, fought savage duels with their battering fronts and short, ripping horns, as they went; but always onward they pressed, the south with its sun-steeped pastures drawing them, the north with its menace of storm driving them before it. And the sound of their bellowings and their tramplings rose in a heavy thunder above their march, till the wide plain seemed to rock with it.

Countless as was their array, however, they seemed dimly conscious, with a sort of vague, communal, unindividual sort of per-

ception, that their numbers and their power were as nothing in comparison with the migrations of preceding autumns. The arrogance of irresistible might had passed from them. They went sullenly, as if under a cloud of dark expectation. And the separate herds hung closer to their neighbours than had hitherto been the custom in the horde, as if seeking reassurance against an unknown threat.

All around the far-flung outskirts of the host ran, skulking and dodging, its accustomed, hereditary foes—the little slim, yellow-grey coyotes and the gaunt timber-wolves. The coyotes, dangerous only to the dying or to very young calves separated from their mothers, were practically ignored, save for an occasional angry rush on the part of some nervous cow; and, trusting to their amazing speed, they frequently ran far in among the herds, in the hope of spotting some sick animal and keeping it in view till the host should pass on and leave it to its fate. The great grey timber-wolves, however, were honoured with more attention. Powerful enough alone to pull down a yearling calf, they were always watched with savage and apprehensive eyes by the cows, and forced

to keep their distance. The stragglers, old and young, were their prey, or sometimes a wounded bull, worsted in battle and driven from his herd, and weak from loss of blood. In twos and threes they prowled, silent and grimly watchful, hanging on the flanks of the host or picking their way in its vast, betrampled, desolated trail.

On the outermost edge of the right or western wing of the bellowing host went a compact little herd, which hung together with marked obstinacy. It consisted of a dozen cows with their calves and yearlings, and two adult bulls, one of which, the younger and less heavily maned, kept diffidently at the rear and seemed to occupy the busy but subordinate post of a sort of staff-sergeant. The other was an immense bull, with splendid leonine front and with a watchful, suspicious look in his eyes which contrasted sharply with the sullen stare of his fellows. He had the wisdom learned in many eventful migrations, and he captained his herd imperiously, being sure, in the main, as to what was best for them. But of just one thing he seemed somewhat unsure. He appeared irresolute as to the southward march or else as to the

companionship of the host. By hanging upon the skirts of it, he held himself ready to detach his little herd from its company and make off among the foot-hills in case of need. At the same time, by thus keeping on the outskirts of the host he secured for his little knot of satellites the freshest and sweetest pasturage.

However disquieting the brown bull's apprehensions, they were too vague to let him know what it was he feared. For the accustomed perils of the march he entertained just so much dread as befitted a sagacious leader—no more. The skulking coyotes he disdained to notice. They might skulk or dart about like lean shadows, as near the herd as the jealous cows would permit, and he would never trouble to shake the polished scimitars of his horns at them. The great grey wolves he scorned; but, with perhaps a dim prevision of the day when he should be old and feeble, and driven out from the herd, he could not ignore them. He chased them off angrily if they ventured within the range of his attention. But against an enemy whom he had learned to respect, the Indian hunters, he kept an untiring watch,

and the few white hunters, who had already so thinned the bison host, he remembered with a fear which was mingled with vengeful resentment. Nevertheless, even his well-grounded fear of those human foes was not enough to account for his almost panicky forebodings. These enemies, as he had known them, struck always on the flanks of the host; and he had tactics to elude even the dreadful thunder and spurted lightning of their guns. His fear was of he knew not what, and therefore it ground remorselessly upon his nerves.

For the present, however, there were none of these human enemies near, and the host rolled on southward, with its bellowings and its tramplings, unmolested. Neither Indians nor white men approached this stage of the migration. The autumn days were sunny, beneath a sky bathed in dream. The autumn nights were crisp with tonic frost, and in the pink freshness of the dawn a wide-flung mist arose from the countless puffing nostrils and the frost-rimed, streaming manes. Pasturage was abundant, the tempers of the great bulls were bold and pugnacious, and nothing seemed less likely than that any

disaster could menace so mighty and invincible a host. Yet Brown Bull was uneasy. From time to time he would lift his red-rimmed nostrils, sniff the air in every direction, and scan the summits of the foot-hills far on the right, as if the unknown peril which he apprehended was likely to come from that direction.

As day by day passed on without event, the diffused anxiety of the host quite died away. But Brown Bull, with his wider sagacity or more sensitive intuition, seemed to grow only the more apprehensive and the more vigilant. His temper did not improve under the strain, and his little troop of followers was herded with a severity which must have taxed, for the moment, their faith in its beneficence.

The host lived, fought, fed, as it went, halting only for sleep and the hours of rest. In this inexorable southward drift the right flank passed one morning over a steep little knoll, the crest of which chanced to be occupied by Brown Bull and his herd just at the moment when the moving ranks came to a halt for the forenoon siesta. It was such a post of vantage as Brown Bull loved.

He stood there sniffing with wide, wet nostrils, and searching the horizon for danger. The search was vain, as ever; but just behind him, and closer in toward the main body of the host, he saw something that made his stretched nerves thrill with anger. An old bull had just been driven out from a neighbouring herd, deposed from his lordship and hideously gored by a younger and stronger rival. Staggering from his wounds, and overwhelmed with a sudden terror of isolation, he tried to edge his way into the herd next behind him. He was ejected mercilessly. From herd to herd he staggered, met always by a circle of lowered horns and angry eyes, and so went stumbling back to that lonely doom which, without concern, he had seen meted out to so many of his fellows, but had never thought of as possible to himself. This pitiful sight, of course, was nothing to Brown Bull. It hardly even caught his eye, still less his interest. Had he been capable of formulating his indifferent thoughts upon the matter, they would have taken some such form as: "Serve him right for being licked!" But when at last the wounded outcast was set upon by four big

timber-wolves and pulled, bellowing, to his knees, that was another affair. Brown Bull could not tolerate the sight of the grey wolves triumphing. With a roar of rage he charged down the knoll. His herd, astonished but obedient, lowered their massive heads and charged at his heels. The wolves snarled venomously, forsook their prize, and vanished. Brown Bull led the charge straight on, and over the body of the dying outcast, trampling it into dreadful shapelessness. Then, halting abruptly, he looked about him in surprise. The wolves were gone. His rage passed from him. He led his followers tranquilly back to their place on the knoll, to the accompaniment of puzzled snortings from the neighbour herds.

The herd fell to feeding at once, as if nothing in the least unusual had happened. But Brown Bull, after cropping the sweet, tufted grass for a few minutes, was seized with one of his pangs of apprehension, and raised his head for a fresh survey of the distance. This time he did not resume his feeding, but stood for several minutes shifting his feet uneasily until he had quite satisfied himself that the ponies which he saw emerging

from a cleft in the foot-hills were not a harmless wild troop, but carried each a red rider. He had reached the Indian country, and his place on the flank of the host, as his craft and experience told him, was no longer a safe one.

For a little, Brown Bull stood irresolute, half inclined to lead his followers away from the host and slip back into the wooded foothills whence they had come. Then, either moved by a remembrance of the harsh winter of the north, or drawn by the pull of the host upon his gregarious heart, he lost the impulse. Instead of forsaking the host, he led his herd down the knoll and insinuated it into a gap in the ranks.

Here Brown Bull was undoubtedly a trespasser. But instead of forcing a combat or, rather, a succession of combats, he contented himself with holding his straitened ground firmly rather than provocatively. His towering bulk and savage, resolute bearing made the nearest bulls unwilling to challenge his intrusion. Little by little the herds yielded way, half unconsciously, seeking merely their own convenience. Little by little, also, Brown Bull continued his crafty

encroachments, till at length, after perhaps a couple of hours of manœuvring, he had his charges some four or five hundred yards in from the exposed flank and well placed near the front of the march, where the pasturage was still sweet and untrampled.

The Indians, sweeping up on their mad ponies, rode close to the flank of the host and chose their victims at leisure. Killing for meat and not for sport, they selected only young cows in good condition, and were too sparing of their powder to shoot more than they needed. They clung to the host for some hours, throwing the outer fringe of it into confusion, but attracting little attention from the herds beyond their reach. Once in a while some bull, more fiery than his fellows, would charge with blind, uncalculating valour upon these nimble assailants, only to be at once shot down for his hide. But for the most part, none but those herds actually assailed paid much attention to what was going on. They instinctively crowded away from the flying horsemen, the flames and thunder of the guns. But their numbers and the nearness of their companions seemed to give them a stolid sense of security even

when the swift death was almost upon them. As for Brown Bull, all this was just what he had expected and made provision against. The assault came nowhere near his own charges, so he treated it as none of his affair.

The Indians withdrew long before nightfall; but the following day brought others, and for a week or more there was never a day without this harassing attack upon one flank or another of the host, or sometimes upon both flanks at once. Again and again, as the outer ranks dwindled, Brown Bull found himself nearing the danger zone, and discreetly on each occasion he worked his herd in a few hundred yards nearer the centre.

Then, for a space of some days, the attacks of the Indians ceased, and the wolves and coyotes came back to dog the trail of the diminished host. But Brown Bull was not unduly elated by this respite. He held his followers to their place near the centre of the march, and maintained his firm and apprehensive vigilance untiringly. The days were now hot and cloudless, and so dry that the host seemed literally to drink up every brook or pond it passed, and an irritating

dust-cloud overhung the rear of the trampling hoofs.

But these few days of peace were but prelude to harsher trial. From somewhere far to the left came now a band of white hunters, who rode around the host and attacked it on both flanks at once. They killed more heedlessly and brutally than the Indians, for the sake of the hides rather than for meat, each man hurriedly marking his own kill and then dashing on to seek more victims. Each night they camped, and in the cool of the morning overtook the slow-moving host on their tireless mustangs. The trail of stripped red carcasses which they left behind them glutted all the wolves, coyotes, and carrion crows for leagues about, and affronted the wholesome daylight of the plains. This visitation lasted for five or six days, and the terror it created spread inwards to the very heart of the host. Gradually the host quickened its march, leaving itself little time for feeding and only enough rest for the vitally essential process of rumination. At last the white marauders, satiated with slaughter, dropped behind, and immediately the host, now shrunken by nearly a third,

slackened its pace and seemed to forget its punishment. Phlegmatic and short of memory, the herds were restored to content by a day of heavy rain, which laid the dust, and freshened their hides, and instilled new sweetness into the coarse plains grasses. But Brown Bull's apprehensions redoubled, and he grew lean with watching.

The path of migration—the old path, known to the ancestors of this host for many generations—now led for many days along the right bank of a wide and turbulent but usually shallow river. The flat roar of the yellow flood upon its reefs and sand-banks, mixed with the bellowings and tramplings of the host to form a thunder which could be heard in the far-off foot-hills, transmuted there to a murmur like the sea.

There came now a day of intense and heavy heat, with something in the air which made the whole host uneasy. They stopped pasturing, and the older bulls and cows sniffed the dead air as if they detected some strange menace upon it. Toward the middle of the afternoon a mysterious haze, of a lovely rosy saffron hue, appeared in the south-east beyond the river. It spread up the hot,

turquoise-blue sky with a terrifying rapidity, blotting out the empty plain as it approached. Soon all the eyes of the host were turned upon it. Suddenly, at the heart of the rosy haze, a gigantic yellow-black column took shape, broad at the base and spreading wide at the summit, till it lost itself in a swooping canopy of blackish cloud. It drew near at frightful speed, spinning as it came, and licking up the surface of the plain beneath.

Brown Bull, whose herd was just now in the front rank of the host, stood motionless for some seconds, till he had judged the exact direction of the spinning column. Then, with a wild bellow, he lunged forward at a gallop, apparently to meet the oncoming doom. His herd charged close at his heels, none questioning his leadership, and the whole host followed, heads down, blind with panic.

Two or three minutes more, and the sky overhead was darkened. An appalling hum, as of giant wires, drowned the thunder of the galloping host. The hum shrilled to a monstrous and rending screech, and the spinning column swept across the river, wiping it up to the bottom of the channel as it passed. Brown Bull's herd felt a sickening emptiness

in their lungs, and then a wind which almost lifted them from their feet; and their knees failed them in their terror. But their leader had calculated cunningly, and they were well past the track of doom. The cyclone caught the hinder section of the host diagonally, whirled it into the air like so many brown leaves, and bore it onward to be strewn in hideous fragments over the plain behind. Immediately the sky cleared. There was no more wind, but a chilly, throbbing breath. The yelling of the cyclone sank away, and the river could be heard once more brawling over its reefs and bars. A full third of the host had been blotted from existence. The survivors, still trembling, remembered that they were hungry, and fell to cropping the gritty and littered grass.

On the following day the shrunken host forded the river, which at this point turned sharply westward across the path of the migration. The river had risen suddenly owing to a cloud-burst further up its course, and many of the weaklings and youngsters of the host were swept away in the passage. But Brown Bull's herd, well guarded and disciplined, got over without loss; and for

the next few days, there being no peril in sight, its wary captain suffered it to lead the march.

And now they came into a green and fertile and well-watered land, where it would have been comforting to linger and recover their strength. But here, once more, the white man came against them.

At the first signs of these most dreaded foes, Brown Bull had discreetly edged his herd back a little way into the host, so that it no longer formed the vanguard. The white men killed savagely and insatiably all along both flanks, as if not the need of hides and meat, but the sheer lust of killing possessed them. One hunter, whose pony had stepped into a badger-hole and fallen with him, was gored and trampled by a wounded bull. This fired his comrades to a more implacable savagery. They noticed that the host was a scanty one compared with the countless myriads of preceding years. "Them redskins up north have been robbing us!" they shouted, with fine logic. Then they remembered that the migrating herds were anxiously awaited by other tribes of Indians further south, who largely depended upon

the bison for their living. An inspiration seized them. "Let's fix the red varmints! If we jest wipe these 'ere buffalo clean out, right now, the redskins 'll starve, an' this country 'll be well quit o' them!"

But strive as they might to carry out this humane intention, for all their slaughter on the flanks, the solid nucleus of the host remained unshaken, and kept drifting steadily southward. It began to look as if, in spite of Fate, a mighty remnant would yet make good its way into the broken country, dangerous with hostile Indians, whither the white hunters would hesitate to pursue. It was decided, therefore, to check the southward march of the host by splitting it up into sections and scattering it to this side and that, thus depriving it of the united migrant impulse, and leaving its destruction to be completed at more leisure.

These men knew the bison and his deep-rooted habits. In knots of three and four they stationed themselves, on their ponies, directly in the path of the advancing host.

On the flanks they attracted small attention. But directly in front, the sight of

them aroused the leaders of the march to fury. They pawed the ground, snorted noisily, and then charged with their massive heads low down. And the whole host, with sudden rising rage, charged with them. It looked as if those little knots of waiting men and ponies must be annihilated.

But when that dark, awful torrent of rolling manes, wild eyes, keen horns, and shattering hoofs drew close upon the waiting groups of men, these lifted their guns and fired, one after the other, straight in the faces of the nearest bulls.

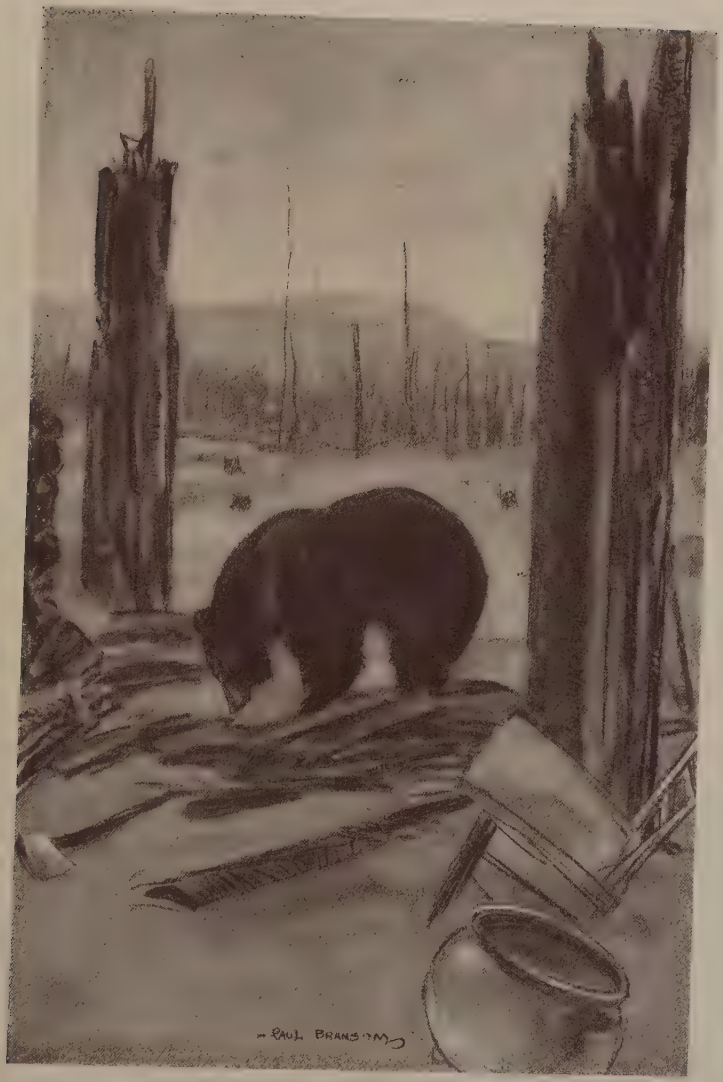
The result was instantaneous, as usual. Whether, as in most cases, the leaders fell, or, as in other instances, they escaped, the rolling torrent split and parted at once to either side as if the flame and roar from the muzzles of the guns had been so many shoulders of rock. Once divided, and panic-stricken by finding their foes at the heart of their array, the herds went to pieces hopelessly, and were easily driven off toward all points of the compass.

But in one instance—just one—the plan of the slaughterers did not work out quite as anticipated.

Three of the hunters had taken station exactly opposite the centre of the host. Brown Bull and his herd were immediately behind the front rank at this point. When the great charge was met by the roar and the spirting flames, the leading bull went down, and the front rank split, as a matter of course, to pass on either side of this terrifying obstacle. But Brown Bull seemed to feel that here and now, straight before him, was the unknown peril which had been shaking his heart throughout the whole long march. In this moment his heart was no more shaken, and the tradition of his ancestors, which bade him follow his leaders like a sheep, was torn up by the roots. He did not swerve, but swept down straight upon the astonished knot of horsemen ; his trusting herd came with him ; and all behind, as usual, followed blindly.

The three white men turned to flee before the torrent of death. But Brown Bull caught the leader's pony in the flank, ripped it and bore it down, passing straight on over the bodies, which, in a dozen seconds, were hardly to be distinguished from the earth to which they had so suddenly and so awfully

"The shambles of the plain."



"For a day he wandered disconsolately over and about the ruins."

Hoof and Claw]

been rendered back. Of the other two, one made good his escape, because his pony had taken alarm more quickly than its master and turned in time. The third was overtaken because a cow which he had wounded stumbled in his way, and he and his pony went out along with her beneath the hoofs of Brown Bull's herd.

Brown Bull gave no heed to his triumph, if, indeed, he realized it at all.

What he realized was that the apprehended doom had fallen upon the host, and the host was no more. He kept on with his long, lumbering gallop, till he had his herd well clear of all the struggling remnants of the host, which he saw running aimlessly this way and that, the slaughterers hanging to them like wolves. The sight did not interest him, but, as it covered the whole plain behind him, he could not escape it if he looked back. Forward the way was clear. Far forward and to the right, he saw woods and ridgy uplands, and purple-blue beyond the uplands a range of ragged hills. Thither he led his herd, allowing them not a moment to rest or pasture so long as the shambles of the plain remained in view. But that night,

the tiny, lonely remnant of the vanished myriads of their kin, they fed and slept securely in a well-grassed glade among the hills.

A Master of Supply

UNLIKE his reserved and supercilious red cousin of kindlier latitudes, Blue Fox was no lover of solitude; and seeing that the only solitude he knew was the immeasurable desolation of the Arctic barrens, this was not strange. The loneliness of these unending and unbroken plains, rolled out flat beneath the low-hung sky to a horizon of white haze, might have weighed down even so dauntless a spirit as his had he not taken care to fortify himself against it. This he did, very sagaciously, by cultivating the companionship of his kind. His snug burrow beneath the stunted bush-growth of the plains was surrounded by the burrows of perhaps a score of his race.

During the brief but brilliant Arctic summer, which flared across the lonely wastes with a fervour which strove to compensate

for the weary duration of its absence, the life of Blue Fox was not arduous. But during the long, sunless winters, with their wild snows, their yelling gales, their interminable night, and their sudden descents of still, intense frost, so bitter that it seemed as if the incalculable cold of outer space were invading this undefended outpost of the world, then Blue Fox and his fellows would have had a sorry time of it but for two considerations. They had their cheer of association in the snug burrows deep beneath the covering of the snows; and they had their food supplies, laid by with wise forethought in the season when food was abundant.

Therefore, when the old bear, grown too restless and savage to hibernate, had often to roam the darkness hungry, and when the wolf-pack was forced to range the frozen leagues for hardly meat enough to keep their gaunt flanks from falling in, the provident foxes had little to fear from either cold or famine.

The burrow of Blue Fox was dug in a patch of dry, sandy soil that formed a sort of island half a dozen acres broad in the vast surrounding sea of the swampy tundra.

The island was not high enough or defined enough to be called a knoll. To the eye it was nothing more than an almost imperceptible bulge in the enormous monotony of the levels. But its elevation was enough to secure it good drainage and a growth of more varied herb and bush than that of the moss-covered tundra, with here and there a little open space of turf and real grass which afforded its tenants room to bask deliciously in the glow of the precipitate summer.

Hot and melting as the Arctic summer might be, it could never reach with its ardent fingers the foundations of eternal frost which underlay all that land at a depth of a very few feet. So Blue Fox dug his burrow not too deep, but rather on a gentle slant, and formed his chamber at a depth of not much more than two feet below the roots of the bushes. Abundantly lined with fine, dry grasses, which he and his family kept scrupulously clean, it was always warm and dry and sweet.

It was an afternoon in the first of the summer, one of those long, unclouded, glowing, warm afternoons of the Arctic, when the young shoots of herb and bush seem to

lengthen visibly under the eye of the watcher, and the flower-buds open impetuously as if in haste for the caresses of the eager moths and flies. For the moment the vast expanses of the barren were not lonely. The nesting juncos and snow-buntings twittered cheerfully among the busy growths. The mating ducks clamoured harshly along the bright coils of the sluggish stream which wound its way through the marshes. On an islet in the middle of a reedy mere, some half mile to the east, a pair of great white trumpeter swans had their nest, scornful of concealment. A mile or more off to the west a herd of caribou browsed the young green shoots of the tundra growth, moving slowly northward. The windless air was faintly musical with the hum of insects and with the occasional squeaks and scurryings of unseen lemming mice in their secret roadways under the dense green sphagnum. Blue Fox sat up, not far from the entrance to his tunnel, blinking lazily in the glow and watching the play of his fuzzy cubs and their slim, young, blue-grey mother in and out their doorway. Scattered here and there over their naked little domain he saw the families

of his kindred, similarly care-free and content with life.

But care-free as he was, Blue Fox never forgot that the price of freedom from care was eternal vigilance. Between his eyes and the pallid horizon he detected a wide-winged bird swinging low over the marshes. He knew at once what it was that with slow-moving, deliberate wings came up, nevertheless, so swiftly. It was no goose, or brant, or fish-loving merganser, or inland wandering saddbleback gull that flew in such a fashion. He gave a shrill yelp of warning, answered at once from all over the colony; and at once the playing cubs whisked into their burrows or drew close to their mothers, and sat up to stare with bright, suspicious eyes at the strong-winged flier.

Blue Fox himself, like most of his full-grown fellows, never stirred. But his eyes never swerved for a second from the approach of that ominous, winnowing shape. It was a great Arctic hawk-owl, white mottled with chocolate; and it seemed to be hunting in a leisurely fashion, as if well fed and seeking excitement rather than a meal. It came straight on toward the colony of the foxes,

flying lower and lower, till Blue Fox began to gather his steel-like muscles to be ready for a spring at its throat if it should come within reach. It passed straight over his head, its terrible hooked beak half open, its wide, implacable eyes, jewel bright and hard as glass, glaring downward with still menace. But, with all its courage, it did not dare attack any one of the calmly watchful foxes. It made a sweeping half circuit of the colony, and then sailed on toward the mere of the white swans. Just at the edge of the mere it dropped suddenly into a patch of reeds, to flap up again, a second later, with a limp form trailing from its talons—the form of a luckless mother-duck surprised in brooding her eggs. A great hubbub of startled and screaming water-fowl pursued the marauder; but the swans from their islet, as the foxes from their colony, looked on with silent indifference.

Blue Fox, basking in the sun, was by and by seized with a restlessness, a sense of some duty left undone. He was not hungry, for the wastes were just now so alive with nesting birds and swarming lemmings, and their fat little cousins, the lemming mice, that

his hunting was a swift and easy matter. He did not even have to help his mate, occupied though she was, in a leisurely way, with the care of her cubs. But across his mind came an insistent memory of the long and bitter Arctic night, when the world would seem to snap under the deadly intensity of the cold, and there would be no birds but a few ptarmigan in the snow, and the fat lemmings would be safe beneath the frozen roofs of their tunnels, and his cleverest hunting would hardly serve him to keep the keen edge off his hunger. In the first sweet indolence of spring he had put far from him the remembrance of the famine season. But now it was borne in upon him that he must make provision against it. Shaking off his nonchalance, he got up, stretched himself elaborately, and trotted down briskly into the tundra.

He picked his way daintily over the wide beds of moist sphagnum, making no more sound as he went than if his feet had been of thistledown. At some distance from the skirts of the colony the moss was full of scurrying and squeaking noises. Presently he crouched and crept forward like a cat.

The next instant he pounced with an indescribable speed and lightness, his head and forepaws disappearing into the moss. He had penetrated into one of the screened runways of the little people of the sphagnum. The next moment he lifted his head with a fat lemming dangling from either side of his fine jaws. He laid down the prize and inspected it with satisfaction—a round-bodied creature some six inches long, of a grey colour mottled with rusty red, with a mere apology for a tail, and with the toes of its fore-paws exaggeratedly developed, for use, perhaps, in constructing its mossy tunnels. For a few seconds Blue Fox pawed his prey playfully, as one of his cubs would have done. Then, bethinking himself of the serious business which he had in hand, he picked it up and trotted off to a dry spot which he knew of, just on the fringe of the island.

Now, of one thing Blue Fox was well aware, it having been borne in upon him by experience—*viz.*, that a kill n t soon eaten would speedily spoil in this weather. But he knew something else, which he could only have arrived at by the strictly rational

process of putting two and two together—he understood the efficacy of cold storage.

Burrowing down through the light soil, he dug himself a little cellar, the floor of which was the stratum of perpetual frost. Here, in this preservative temperature, he deposited the body of the fat lemming, and covered the place from prying eyes with herbage and bush drawn lightly over it. Hunting easily and when the mood was upon him, he brought three more lemmings to the storehouse that same day. On the next day and the next an Arctic tempest swept over the plain, an icy rain drove level in whipping sheets, the low sky was crowded with hurrying ranks of torn black vapour, and the wise foxes kept to their holes. Then the sun came back to the waste places, and Blue Fox returned to his hunting.

Without in any way pushing himself, without stinting his own repasts or curtailing his hours of indolence or of play, Blue Fox attended to his problem of supply so efficiently that in the course of a couple of weeks he had perhaps two score plump carcasses, lemmings and mice, laid out in this cold storage cellar of his. Then he

filled it in right to the top with grass-roots, turf, and other dry stuff that would not freeze into armour-plate, covered it over with light soil and bushes, and left it to await the hour of need.

In the course of the summer, Blue Fox, like all his fellows, established a number of these lemming *caches*, till by the time when the southward bird-flight proclaimed the summer at an end, the question of supply was one to give him no further anxiety. When the days were shrunken to an hour or two of sunlight, and the tundra was frozen to stone, and the winds drove the fine snow before them in blinding drifts, then Blue Fox dismissed his stores from his mind and devoted himself merrily to the hunting of his daily rations. The Arctic hares were still abundant, and not yet overwild from ceaseless harrying; and though the chase of these long-legged and nimble leapers was no facile affair, it was by no means too arduous for the tastes of an enterprising and active forager like Blue Fox.

In the meantime the household of Blue Fox, like all the other households in the little colony, had been substantially reduced in numbers. All the cubs, by this time

grown nearly to full stature, if not to full wisdom, had migrated. There was neither room nor supply for them now in the home burrows, and they had not yet arrived at the sense of responsibility and forethought that would lead them to dig burrows for themselves. Gently enough, perhaps, but with a firmness which left no room for argument, the youngsters had all been turned out of doors. There seemed but one thing for them to do—to follow the southward migration of the game; and lightly they had done it. They had a hard winter before them, but with good hunting, and fair luck in dodging the traps and other perils that were bound to dog their inexperienced feet, they would return next spring, ripe with wisdom and experience, dig burrows of their own, and settle down to the responsibilities of Arctic family life.

To Blue Fox, sleeping warm in his dry burrow when he would, and secure in the knowledge of his deep-stored supplies, the gathering menace of the cold brought no terrors. By the time the sun had disappeared altogether, and the often brilliant but always terrible and mysterious Arctic night had

settled firmly upon the barrens, game had grown so scarce and shy that even so shrewd a hunter as Blue Fox might often range a whole day without the luck to capture a ptarmigan or a hare. The hare, of course, like the ptarmigan, was at this season snowy-white ; and Blue Fox would have had small fortune, indeed, in the chase had he himself remained in summer livery. With the setting in of the snow, he had quickly changed his coat to a like colour ; and therefore, with his wariness, his unerring nose, and his marvellous lightness of tread, he was sometimes able to surprise the swift hare asleep. In this fashion, too, he would often capture a ptarmigan, pouncing upon it just as the startled bird was spreading its wings for flight. When he failed in either venture—which was often enough the case—he felt himself in no way cast down. He had the excitement of the chase, the satisfaction of stretching his strong, lithe muscles in the race across the hard snow. And then, when the storm clouds were down close upon the levels, and all the world was black, and the great winds from the Pole, bitterer than death, raved southward with their sheeted

ghosts of fine drift—then Blue Fox, with his furry mate beside him, lay blinking contentedly in the deep of his burrow, with food and to spare close at hand.

But happy as he was in the main, Blue Fox was not without his cares. Two enemies he had, so strong and cunning that the menace of them was never very far from his consciousness. The wolf, his master in strength, though not in craft, was always ready to hunt him with a bitter combination of hunger and of hate. And the wolverine, cunning beyond all the other kindreds of the wild, and of a sullen ferocity which few would dare to cross, was for ever on the search for the stored supplies of the foxes.

The wolverine, solitary and morose, slow of movement, and defiant even toward the Polar storm, prowled in all weathers. One day chance led him upon one of Blue Fox's storage cellars. The snow had been recently pawed away, and the wolverine, quick to take the hint, began instantly to dig. It was astonishingly easy work. His short, powerful fore-paws made the dry turf and light earth fly, and speedily he came to the store of frozen lemmings. But before he

had quite glutted his great appetite, he was interrupted.

Though the storm was raging over the outer world, to Blue Fox in his burrow had come a monition of evil. He had whisked out to inspect his stores. He found the wolverine head downward in his choicest cellar.

Hot as was his rage, it did not burn up his discretion. This was a peril to be dealt with drastically. He knew that, if the robber was merely driven off, he would return and haunt the purlieus of the colony, and end by finding and rifling every storehouse in the neighbourhood.

Blue Fox stole back and roused the occupants of the nearest burrows. In two minutes a dozen angry foxes were out and creeping through the storm. In vengeful silence they fell upon the thief as he feasted carelessly; and in spite of the savage fight he put up, they tore him literally to pieces.

The danger of the wolves was more terrible and more daunting. All through the first half of the winter there had been no sign of a wolf in the neighbourhood, the trail of the wandering caribou having lured them

"He found the wolverine head downward in his choicest cellar."

far to the eastward. Then it chanced, when Blue Fox was chasing a hare over the snow, beneath the green, rose, and violet dancing flames of the aurora, that a thin, quavering howl came to his ears. He stopped short. He lost all interest in the hare. Glancing over his shoulder, he saw a greyish patch moving swiftly under the shifting radiance. It was on his trail, that patch of death. He lengthened himself out, belly to earth, and sped for the burrows. And the dancing lights, shifting from colour to colour as they clustered and hurtled across the arch of sky, seemed to stoop in cold laughter over his lonely and desperate flight.

Blue Fox could run fast, but his best speed was slow in comparison with that of his gaunt and long-limbed foes. He knew that, had the race before him been a long one, it could have but one result. A glance over his shoulder, as he ran, showed him that the grey shapes were overhauling him ; and, knowing that the distance to his burrow was not long, he felt that he had a chance. A sporting chance, however small, was enough for his courageous spirit, and he raced on with good heart at a pace which soon stretched

his lungs near to bursting. But he spared breath for a sharp yelp of warning, which carried far in the stillness and signalled to his fellows the peril that approached.

As the wolves came up, the fugitive could hear the strong, relentless padding of their feet, and then, half a minute later, the measured hiss of their breathing, the occasional hard click of their fangs. But he did not look back. His ears gave him all the information he required, and he could not afford to risk the loss of the slenderest fraction of a second. As he reached the nearest burrow—it was not his own—it seemed as if the dreadful sounds were already overwhelming him. He dived into the burrow, and jaws of steel clashed at his tail as he vanished.

With a chorus of snarls, the disappointed pack brought up abruptly, checking themselves back upon their haunches. The leaders fell to digging at the burrow, while others scattered off to try the same experiment at the other burrows of the colony. But Blue Fox, breathless and triumphant, only showed his teeth derisively. He knew that no wolf-claws could make any impression on the hard-frozen earth surrounding the inner

portals of the colony. The wolves discovered by chance one of the supply cellars, and quarrelled for a moment over the dozen or so of tit-bits which it contained. And then, realizing that it was no use hanging about in the expectation that any fox would come out to be eaten, the wise old pack-leader swung the pack into ranks and swept them off to hunt other quarry. When the thudding rhythm of their footsteps died into silence, the foxes all came out and sat under the dancing lights, and stared after the terrible receding shapes with a calm and supercilious scorn.

The White Wolf

ON the night when he was born, in the smoke-smelling wigwam beside the lone Michikamaw, there had come a strange, long howling of the wind amid the cleft granite heights which overhung the water. At the sound the fainting girl on the pile of deer-skins opened eyes which grew suddenly wild and dark. She listened intently for a moment, and then groped for the little form which had been laid at her breast.

"That is his name," she muttered. "He shall be called Wind-in-the-Night."

The old squaw, her husband's mother, who was attending upon her, shook her head.

"Hush, my daughter!" she said soothingly. "That is not the wind. That is the old white wolf howling on the mountain. Let us call him White Wolf, since he is of the totem of the wolf. And perhaps the old

white wanderer, who disdains to hunt with the pack, will befriend him and bring him good fortune."

"His name is Wind-in-the-Night," said the young mother, in a voice suddenly loud and piercing. Then she turned her head towards the wall of the wigwam wearily, and, with a sharp sigh, her spirit passed from her lips, hurrying out over the black spruce ridges and barren hills to seek the happy hunting grounds of her fathers.

The old woman snatched up the child, lest the mother's spirit in passing should lure it away with her.

"Yes," she cried hastily, hiding the little one in a fold of her blanket and glancing over her shoulder, "his name *is* Wind-in-the-Night."

It would never have done—as the father afterwards agreed—to gainsay the child's mother at that moment of supreme authority, but the old woman had her misgivings; for she believed it was the white wolf, not the wind, who had spoken in that hour, and she trembled lest the child should come under his ban.

As the years passed, however, it began to

appear that the old squaw's fears were groundless. Among the lodges beside the bleak Michikamaw the child grew up without misadventure; and when he was big enough to begin his boyish hunting and to follow the trails among the dark spruce forests, it began to be rumoured that he was in some special favour with the wolf folk. It was said—and, though he could not be persuaded to talk of it, he was never known to deny it—that the old white wolf, whose howling was like the wind in the mountain clefts, had been seen again and again following the boy, not obtrusively, but at a little distance and with an air of watching over him. Certain it was that the boy was without fear to go alone in the forest, and went always as if with a sense of being safeguarded by some unseen influence. Moreover, whenever the wind howled in the night, or the voice of the solitary wolf came quavering down, like the wind, from the granite heights, the boy would be seized with a restlessness and a craving to go forth into the darkness. This impulse was quelled sternly by his father until the lad was old enough and wise enough to restrain it of his own accord; but it was not held, among the

tribe, to be any unaccountable or dreadful thing that the boy should be thus compassed about with mystery, for this was the tribe of the Nasquapees, the "Wizards," who were all mystics and credited with secret powers.

As Wind-in-the-Night grew to manhood, the white wolf grew less and less conspicuous in his affairs, till he came to be little more than a tradition. But at any time of crisis there was sure to be some suggestion of him, some reminder, whether in a far-off windy howl that might be wolf or might be wind, or else in a gaunt, white shadow flitting half-seen across the youth's trail. Whether, as all the tribe took for granted, it was always the same wolf, a magic beast for ever young and vigorous, or whether the grim warder who had presided over the child's birth had bequeathed his mysterious office to a descendant like himself, is a point that need not be decided. Suffice to say that when, at the age of eighteen, Wind-in-the-Night underwent his initiation into the status of full manhood, a great white wolf played an unbidden but not unlooked-for part in it. When, during that long and solitary fasting on the hill-top, the young man's fainting

eyes saw visions of awe and unknown portent, and strange, phantasmal shapes of beast and bird came floating up about him with eyes of menace, always at the last moment would come that pallid, prowling warder and drive the ghosts away.

* * * * *

It was a bad winter. In the grey fishing village at the mouth of the Natashquouan came word to Wind-in-the-Night that certain of the scattered bands of his tribe in the interior were near to starving. He had been now some six months absent from home, guiding a party of prospectors, and his heart was troubled with desire for the little, lonely cluster of lodges on the shore of the Michikamaw. He thought of his own spacious wigwam of birch bark, with the crossed poles projecting above the roof. With a pang of solicitude, he thought of the comely and kindly young squaw, his wife, and of that straight-limbed, copper-coloured little five-year-old, his son, whose dark eyes danced like the sunlight on the ripples, and who would always run laughing to meet him and clutch him by the knees so sturdily.

Wind-in-the-Night wondered if they were hungry. Was it possible that there could be fear and famine in that far-off wigwam deep in the snows, while he, here under the white man's roof, was warm and well fed? With smouldering eyes and no explanations, he resigned his profitable post and started inland, on his snow shoes, with a toboggan-load of pemmican and flour. The men of the village, pipe in hand, and weary-eyed with their winter inactivity, looked after him from their doorways and shook their heads.

"He'll never make the Michikamaw with that there load," muttered one.

"It's the wolves 'll be gittin' the load an' him too!" growled another.

Another spat tobacco-juice into the snow in a sort of resigned derision. Then all closed their doors tight against the deathly cold, huddled up to their stoves, and dreamed grumblingly of spring. The solitary figure bending to the straps of his toboggan never looked back. His thoughts were all on the distant wigwam of birch bark and the woman and child within it, who might be hungry.

Once across the bleak ridge which overlooked the settlement, Wind-in-the-Night was

swallowed up in the untamed, untouched, Labrador wilderness—everywhere a confusion of low hills, bowl-like valleys, and spruce-forests up-thrusting their dark, pointed tops above the enormous overlay of the snow. Wind-in-the-Night swung on with a long, loping, bent-kneed, straight-footed stride, his immense, racquet-like snow-shoes settling into the snow at each step with a curious muffled sigh that had small resemblance to any other sound on earth.

He chose his path unhesitatingly, picking up his landmarks without conscious effort among hill-tops and valleys and ravines which to the uninitiated eye must have all looked alike. Just before noon he halted, lit a fire, made himself a kettle of tea after the comforting fashion he had learned from the white men, and chewed a rocky morsel of pemmican without taking time to cook it. Then he pushed on eagerly.

The shadows began to fall early in that latitude ; and as they began to fall, Wind-in-the-Night began glancing from time to time over his shoulder. He did it half-unconsciously, so absorbed was he in his thoughts. At last he caught himself at it, as it were,

and for a moment wondered what he did it for. The next instant, with a little tingling at the nape of his neck—just where, on a dog or a moose, the hair stiffens at such moments—he understood.

He felt that he was being followed.

His path was the open, snow-sheeted channel of a little river, with the fir woods crowding down to its brink on either side. Wind-in-the-Night halted and peered into the thickets with eyes trained and penetrating, but he could distinguish nothing. He listened, but there was not a sound in all that lifeless world, save a ghostly settling of the snow somewhere behind him. He sniffed the air, but his nostrils could detect no taint upon it. He pushed on again, and immediately he felt in his spine, in his hair, that the depths of the forest, to right and to left, were full of moving life.

Then he knew that he was being trailed by many wolves.

It was the thought of the woman and the boy, hungry in their wigwam on the Michikamaw, that made his heart sink. He knew that for the moment he was safe, but, when the night came, it would be another matter.

He was not afraid physically, for his muscles and his nerves stretched to the thought of the great fight he would make before the grey beasts should pull him down. But that the food, the succour he was bringing, should never reach the wigwam—this thought turned his heart cold. He increased his pace, hoping to find a spot where he might encamp to advantage and fortify himself for the night.

In that broken country of wide-sown boulders and fantastic outcrop, Wind-in-the-Night had reason to hope for a post of better advantage than the open trail. And after a half mile's further travelling, while yet there was daylight enough to discourage the wolves from showing themselves, he found it. About half-way up a sparsely-wooded hillside to his right, he marked a steep-faced boulder, at the foot of which he resolved to make his stand.

On his way up the slope he passed a small dead fir tree and a stunted birch, both of which he hastily chopped down and flung across his toboggan for firewood. Arriving at the rock, he thrust the loaded toboggan close against its foot, and then, at a distance of about ten feet before it, he hastened to start

his fire. It was a little fire, a true Indian's fire, economical of fuel; for there was no more wood in sight except green spruce, which made but poor and precarious burning unless with plenty of dry stuff to urge it on. He thought for a moment of venturing some little way into the woods in search of fuel; but, even as he was weighing the chances of it, the dusk gathered, and the wolves began to show themselves along the skirts of the timber. Some prowled forth and slipped back again at once into the gloom, while others came out and stood eyeing him steadily.

But more fuel, of some sort, Wind-in-the-Night knew he must have. About half-way between the rock and the skirts of the close growth stood a single small spruce. He knew that its sappy wood would burn with difficulty, but it would do to make the rest of the fuel last longer—possibly, with the most parsimonious care, even till sunrise. Stirring his fire to a brisker blaze—at which, for a moment or two, the wolves drew back into their covert—he strode forth and felled the spruce in half a dozen skilful strokes. Then he dragged it back toward the rock.

To the watchers in the shadow, however,

this looked like a retreat. Their hesitation vanished. As if at a signal, they shot from covert and launched themselves, a torrent of shadowy, flame-eyed, leaping shapes, upon the man. He, catching sight of the dreadful onslaught over his shoulder, dropped the tree he was dragging, and sprang desperately for the doubtful shelter of his fire.

He felt in his heart, however, that he was too late, that he would never reach the fire. Well, he would not die pulled down like a fleeing doe from behind. He faced about and swung up his axe, his lean, dark jaw set grimly.

The hordes of his assailants were within a dozen paces of him, when suddenly they stopped, thrusting out their fore-feet with violence and going back upon their haunches with low snarls. An immense white wolf had sprung in between the hordes and their quarry, and stood there rigid, confronting his fellows with bared fangs, flattened ears, and every hair erect along his back. His authority seemed to be unquestionable, for not a wolf ventured to pass him. Reluctantly, sullenly, they drew back to within a few paces of the edge of the wood; and there they

halted, some crouching, some sitting, some moving restlessly to and fro, and all eyeing their inexorable chief expectantly, as if looking for him to withdraw his inhibition at any moment and let them at their prey.

Wind-in-the-Night gave one long look at his strange protector, then calmly turned and strode back to his fire. Calmly he proceeded to chop his wood into small billets, for the more frugal use. Then he moved the fire closer in toward the foot of the rock, in order that a smaller blaze might suffice to warm him through the night. Seating himself with his back to the loaded toboggan, he prepared his supper. His appetite craved a thick, hot soup of pemmican, but he had a feeling that the enticing smell of such a meal on the icy air might make the wolves forget their deference to his protector. He contented himself with a sticky and unpalatable gruel made by stirring a couple of handfuls of flour into the boiling tea, and he felt a reasonable confidence that the smell of such fare would prove no irresistible temptation to wolfish nostrils. The thought occurred to him that perhaps he ought, in courtesy, to throw a chunk of pemmican

to his protector, who was now pacing slowly and methodically to and fro before him like a sentinel, with eyes fixed ever on those waiting hordes. But to Wind-in-the-Night the great white beast was no mortal wolf, and he feared to affront him by the offer of white man's food.

The brief meal done, Wind-in-the-Night lighted his pipe and smoked stolidly, crouching over the small fire. In spite of the terrific cold, he was warm enough here, with the rock close at his back, the snow banked up at either side, and his blankets about him. From time to time he fed the fire frugally, and calculated that at this rate he could make his fuel last the whole night through. But sleep was not to be thought of. His small, unflinching eyes looked out across the meagre flames, through the thin reek of the smoke, and met calmly the scores of cruel, narrowed eyes glaring upon him grimly from the edges of the timber. But the eyes of the tireless sentinel he did not meet, for they were kept always turned away from him. How long, he wondered, would the sentinel remain tireless ? Or how long would those ravening watchers remain obedient

"The gaunt, tirelessly patrolling shape of his white sentinel."

Hoof and Claw]

to the authority that denied their hunger relief? No, decidedly he must not sleep.

Smoking endlessly, feeding the little fire and crouching over it, thinking of the wigwam on the lone, white shore of the Michikamaw, and watching ever that dread half-circle of hungry eyes, and the gaunt, tirelessly patrolling shape of his white sentinel, he began to see strange visions. The waiting wolves vanished. In their place, emerging like mists from the forest and taking form in the firelight, came the spirits of the totems of his ancestors—white bears and black with eyes of men, eagles that walked stridingly, grey lynxes with a stare that seemed to pierce him through the bone, and towering black moose bulls with the storm-drift whirling in their antlers. They filled him with awe and wonder, but he had no fear of them, for he knew that he had done no trespass against the traditions. Then, without surprise, he saw his white guardian, the living presentment of his own totem, grow at once to the stature of a caribou, and come and sit down opposite him just across the fire, and look meaningly into his eyes. Wind-in-the-Night strove desperately to interpret that grave

meaning. As his brain groped after it, suddenly a long, thin howling filled his ears, whether the voice of the wind or the voice of a wolf, he could not tell.

The sound grew louder, louder, more penetrating and insistent, and then he came out of his vision with a start. He lifted his head, which had fallen on his breast. A late and aged moon hung distorted just over the line of the tree-tops before him. He was deadly cold, and the fire had burned down to a little heap of red embers. The dreadful waiting hordes had all vanished from the skirts of the timber, whirling off, doubtless, on the trail of some unprohibited quarry. Only the white sentinel remained, and he had shrunk back to his former stature, which was beyond that of his fellows, indeed, but not altogether incredible. He was sitting on his haunches just the other side of the dying fire. His long muzzle was lifted straight in the air, and he was howling to the decrepit moon.

As Wind-in-the-Night lifted his head, the white wolf stopped howling, dropped his nose, and stared earnestly into the man's eyes. Hurriedly but carefully, the man

thrust some dry sticks into the embers and fanned them into flame. Then he stood up. He knew that the white wolf's howling had awakened him and saved him from being frozen to death.

"Thank you, white brother," he said simply, with firm confidence that the mystical beast could understand human speech in the tongue of the Nasquapees.

The great wolf cocked his ears at the sound, and gazed at the man inquiringly for a second or two. Then he arose slowly and sauntered off into the forest.

Wind-in-the-Night knew that the peril had passed. He heaped wood on the fire with what was, for an Indian, lavish recklessness. When he was well warmed, he went and dragged up the tree which he had felled, then he cooked himself a liberal meal—a strong stew of pemmican and flour—and, having eaten it, felt mightily refreshed. Having no more inclination for sleep, he resumed his journey, resolving to snatch at the midday halt what sleep he should find himself needing.

Now it had chanced, some days earlier than this, that in one of the lodges by the Michika-

maw a child had fallen sick. There was bitter famine in the lodges, but that was plainly not what ailed the little one. None of the wise men of the tribe could diagnose the sickness, and the child was near to death. Then an old brave, the child's uncle, who had been much about the posts of the Hudson Bay Company, which are scattered over Labrador, said that the white man's medicine was a magic to cure all disease, and that, if the little one could but come to one of the posts, his life would surely be saved. The old brave was himself hungering for an excuse to get away to the warmth which was to be found in the dwellings of the white man, and he said that he would take the little one out to North West River to be healed. And the mother, dry-eyed, but with despair at her heart, had let him go. It was only a chance, but it seemed the only chance; and she greatly feared to meet the child's father if it should die in his absence.

Wind-in-the-Night had made good going, and was eating up the long miles of his journey. At noon, in a deep trough dug with his snow-shoes in the snow, and with a good fire at his feet, he had slept soundly for

two hours. In that pure and tonic air but little sleep was needed. That night there was no more sign of wolves, and he felt assured that his strange protector had led them off to other hunting.

The trail from the Natashquouan was leading him almost due north. Late in the afternoon of the fourth day of his journey, he crossed the fresh trail of a wolf-pack running east. He thought little of it, but, from the habit of the trained hunter and trapper, he gave it a searching scrutiny as he went. Then he stopped short. He had marked another trail underlying that of the wolf-pack.

It was the trail of a man on snow-shoes, drawing a loaded sledge and travelling eastward.

Wind-in-the-Night concluded at once, from his direction, that the traveller came from the lodges on the Michikamaw. It must be one of his own people. He examined the tracks minutely, and presently made out that the traveller was going unsteadily, with an occasional stumble, as if from weariness or weakness. And the wolf-pack was hunting him.

The trails being fresh, it was plain that the hunt could not be far ahead. Acting on the first impulse of his courageous spirit, Wind-in-the-Night started instantly in pursuit, hunting the hunters. Then came the memory of his errand, the thought of the woman and the boy in the wigwam of birch bark, hungry and needing him; and he stopped, half turning to go back.

For some seconds he stood there in an agony of irresolution, his heart dragging him both ways. If he went to the help of the hunted man, he might, more than probably, himself be pulled down and devoured by the ravening pack. He must think of his own first, and save his life for them. Then he thought of his fellow-tribesman, worn out with flight, making his last fight alone in the silence and the snow. His wife and boy, at least, were sheltered and with their people about them, and would not be left utterly to starve so long as there was a shred of meat to be shared in the tribe. He tried to turn back to them, but the picture of the spent and stumbling fugitive was too much for him. He snatched up his rifle, a repeating Winchester, from the toboggan, and with a

groan raced onward in the trail of the wolves.

It was not yet sunset, and he felt reasonably assured that the pack would not dare to close in upon their prey before dusk began to fall, so he continued to drag his loaded toboggan along, knowing that, if he should leave it behind him, its precious cargo would fall a prey to the lynxes and the foxes. He calculated to overtake the chase at any moment. As he ran, sweating in his harness in spite of the intense cold, he studied the trail of the wolves, and saw that the pack was not a large one—perhaps not much beyond a score in number. If the fugitive should prove to have any fight left in him, they two would stand back to back, and perhaps be able to pull the desperate venture through.

Before he had gone half a mile, Wind-in-the-Night saw the trail of the pack divide and seek the coverts on either side of the track of the lonely snow-shoer. That track grew more and more irresolute and uneven, and he knew that the fugitive could not be far ahead. He pictured him even now turning wearily at bay, his back to some rock or steep hillock, his loaded sledge uptilted before him

as a barricade, and the wolves crowding, the thickets on either side, waiting for the moment to rush in upon him.

He pushed on furiously, expecting this picture to greet his eyes at every turn of the trail. But still it delayed, and the tension of his suspense grew almost unbearable. The dusk began to gather among the white-shrouded fir thickets. Why did not the fugitive stop and make ready some defence? Then he rounded a corner, and there, fifty paces ahead of him, was what he was looking for.

But there was a difference in the picture. There were the wolves, no longer in hiding, but stalking forth from the thickets. There was the upthrust of rock. There was the man, at bay with his back to it. But the loaded sledge was not before him as a barrier. Instead of that, it was thrust behind him, as something precious to be guarded with his life. The tall figure, at first bent with fatigue, straightened itself up defiantly, lifted a musket, and fired at a bunch of wolves just springing from the woods on his left. Flinging down the weapon — an old muzzle-loader, which there was no time to re-

charge—he reached back to the sledge for his axe.

At that moment Wind-in-the-Night recognized the old brave's face. With a gasp, he twisted himself clear of his harness and sprang forward. In the same instant the wolves closed in.

In the front of the attack was a great white beast, so swift in his leap that the man had no time to swing up his weapon in defence.

A hoarse cry, whether of grief or horror, burst from the lips of Wind-in-the-Night as the mystic white shape of his protector sprang at the old brave's throat. But he did not hesitate. He whipped up his rifle and fired, and the white wolf dropped sprawling over the front of the sledge.

In a sort of frenzy at the sacrilege of which, in his own eyes, he had just been guilty, Wind-in-the-Night fired shot after shot, dropping a wolf to every bullet. But the fate of their great leader seemed to have abashed the whole pack; and before half a dozen shots were fired, they had slunk off, stricken with panic.

Without a glance at the man whom he had

saved, Wind-in-the-Night stalked forward and flung himself down upon the body of the white wolf, imploring it to pardon what he had done. As he poured out his guttural pleading, a feeble child's voice came to his ears, and he lifted his head with a sudden tightening at his heart.

"I *thought* you would come pretty quick, father," said the small voice tremblingly, "for I'd been calling you ever so long."

A little face, meagre and burning-eyed, was gazing at him trustfully from among the furs in the sledge. Wind-in-the-Night forgot the slain wolf. He bent over the sledge and clutched the frail figure to his breast, too amazed to ask any questions. He shook in every nerve to think how nearly he had refused to come to that unheard call.

The old brave was starting to light a fire.

"The boy was very sick," said he calmly, unjarred by the dreadful ordeal which he had just passed through. "I was taking him to North-West River to be cured by the white man's medicine. But already he recovers, so we will go back to the Michikamaw with the food."

"Good," said Wind-in-the-Night. He

stood up and stared long at the body of the great beast whom he had slain.

"We will take him with us," he said at last, "and give him the burial of a chief. It would be ill work if we should leave him to be eaten by foxes."

Up a Tree

MCLAGGAN stopped short in the middle of the trail and peered sharply into the thick undergrowth on his right. At odd moments during the past half-hour he had experienced a fleeting sensation of being followed; but, absorbed in his own thoughts, he had paid no attention to it. Now, however, he was on the sudden quite convinced of it. Yet he could have sworn he had heard nothing, seen nothing, smelt nothing, to justify the conviction. For nearly half a mile the trail stretched away behind him between the giant trunks and fringing bush-growth — narrow, perfectly straight, completely shadowed from sun and sky, but visible all the way in that curiously transparent, glassy gloom of the under-forest world. There was nothing behind him on the trail—at least, within a half-mile of him.

And the Presence of which he had been warned was very near. As is so often the case with the men who dwell in the great silences, he was conscious at times of possessing something like a sixth sense—a kind of inexplicable and erratic power of perception which frequently neglected to exercise itself when most needed, but which, when it did consent to work, was never guilty of giving a false alarm. Peering with trained eyes, wise in all woodcraft, through the tangle of the undergrowth, he waited absolutely motionless for several minutes. A little black-and-white woodpecker, which had been watching him, ran nimbly up the mast of a giant pine. Nothing else stirred, and there was no other living creature to be discerned. Yet McLaggan knew his intuition had not fooled him. He knew now to a certainty that he was being observed and trailed. He pondered on the fact for a little, and then, muttering to himself, "It's a painter, sure!" he resumed his journey.

McLaggan was not nervous, although for this journey he had left his rifle behind him in camp, and he was aware that a panther, if it meant mischief, was not an adversary

to be scorned. But, skilled as he was in all the lore of the wilderness folk, he knew that no panther, unless with some bitter wrong to avenge, would willingly seek a quarrel with a man. That powerful and crafty cat, not from cowardice but from sagacity, recognized man for its master, and was wont to give him a wide berth whenever possible. Another thing that McLaggan knew was that the panther has occasionally a strange taste for following a man in secret, with excessive caution but remarkable persistence, as if to study him and perhaps find out the causes of his supremacy.

But McLaggan's knowledge of the wild creatures went even further than an acquaintance with their special habits and characteristics. He knew that it was impossible for man to know them thoroughly, because there was always the incalculable element of individuality to make allowance for—an element that delights in confounding the dogmatic assertions of the naturalists. He was sure that the chances were a hundred to one against this unseen pursuer daring to make an attack upon him or even contemplating such a piece of rashness. But,

on the other hand, he recognized that remote hundred-and-first chance. He adjusted the straps of his heavy pack—the cause of his leaving his rifle behind—so that he could rid himself of it on the instant, if necessary, and he carried loose a very effective weapon, the new axe which he had just bought at the Settlement. It was a light, hickory-handled, general-utility axe, such as any expert backwoodsman knows how to use with swift and deadly effect, whether as a hand-to-hand weapon or as a missile. He was not nervous, as we have seen, but he was annoyed that he, the old trailer of many beasts, should thus be trailed in his turn, from whatever motive. He kept an indignantly watchful eye on all the coverts he passed, and he scrutinized suspiciously every considerable bough that stretched across the trail. He had bethought him that the panther's favourite method of attack was to drop upon his quarry's neck from above; and, in spite of himself, the little hairs on the back of his own neck crawled at the idea.

The trail running in from the Settlement to McLaggan's camp among the foot-hills

was a matter of some fifteen miles, and uphill all the way. But in that bracing autumn air, amid those crisp shadows flecked with October's gold, McLaggan was little conscious of the weight of his pack, and his corded muscles felt no fatigue. Under the influence of that unseen and unwelcome companionship behind the veil of the leafage, he quickened his pace gradually, growing ever more and more eager to reach his rifle and take vengeance for the troubling of his journey.

Suddenly, from far ahead, the silence was broken by the high, resonant bugling of a bull elk. It was a poignantly musical sound, but full of menace and defiance, and it carried a long way on that still, resilient air. Again McLaggan regretted his rifle, for the virile fullness of that bugling suggested an unusually fine bull and a splendid pair of antlers. McLaggan wanted meat, to be dried for his winter larder, and he wanted the antlers, for a really good elk head was by this time become a thing of price. It was a possession which enthusiastic members of the Brotherhood of the Elks were always ready to pay well for.

The bugling was several times repeated at brief intervals, and then it was answered defiantly from far on the left. The sonorous challenges answered each other abruptly and approached each other swiftly. McLaggan still further hastened his pace. His grey eyes, under their shaggy brows, blazed with excitement. He forgot all about his unseen, stealthy pursuer. His sixth sense stopped working. He thought only of being in time to see the duel between the two bull elks, the battle for the lordship of the herd of indifferent cows.

To his impatience, it seemed no time at all ere the rival buglings came together and ceased. Then his straining ears caught—very faintly and elusively, as the imperceptible airs of the forest drew this way and that—the dry clash of opposing antlers. It was evident that the battle was nearer at hand than he had imagined. He broke into a noiseless trot, hoping yet to be in time.

Presently he was so near that he could catch, amid the clash of antlers, occasional great windy snortings and explosive, groaning grunts. All at once these noises of battle stopped, changed, passed into a con-

fused scuffling mixed with groans, and then into a wild crashing of flight and pursuit. The fight was over, but McLaggan perceived with a thrill that the flight was coming his way.

Half a minute later the fugitive broke out into the trail and came dashing down it, wild-eyed, nostrils blowing bloody foam and flanks streaming crimson. McLaggan stepped politely aside to let him pass, and he passed unheeding. He had no eyes even for the arch-foe man in this moment of his defeat and humiliation.

But not so the victor! The most splendid specimen of a bull elk that McLaggan's eyes had ever rested upon, he stopped short in his pursuit at sight of the grey, erect figure standing there motionless beside the trail. McLaggan expected him to turn and flee back to his cows and hasten to shepherd them away from danger. But the great beast, now in the hour of his triumph and his most arrogant ferocity, had far other intention. He stood staring at McLaggan for several seconds, but McLaggan saw that there was nothing like fear in that insolent and flaming regard. The bull stamped

sharply on the sod with one knife-edged fore-hoof; and McLaggan, knowing what that meant, glanced around discreetly for the easiest tree to climb. He was now furious at the lack of his rifle, and vowed never again to go without it.

Fortunately for McLaggan, the great bull was no mere blind and brutal ruffian of a fighter. Like all his aristocratic breed, he had a certain punctilio to observe in such affairs. He had first to stamp his challenge several times, snort vehemently, and advance his antlers in fair warning. Then he came on, at first daintily and mincingly, and only after that formal preliminary did he break into his furious rush.

But already McLaggan had swung himself into the tree, just out of reach, leaving his pack at the foot.

For a little McLaggan was engrossed in wondering if he really *was* quite out of reach, so vigorous were the rearings and thrustings of his enemy, so agile the high strokes of those fine, destructive hoofs. Then out of the tail of his eye he caught sight of several elk cows—the herd stealing warily down the trail to see how it was faring

with their victorious lord. They halted, noses in air and ears pricked forward anxiously, wondering at their lord's strange antics under the tree. Then, all together, they wheeled about sharply, as if worked on a single spring, and fled off in enormous bounds over and through the thickets. McLaggan stared after them in surprise, wondering at their abrupt flight. A moment later it was explained to him, as he saw the tawny head and shoulders of an immense panther emerge for just the fraction of a second into the trail.

McLaggan was gratified at this confirmation of his woodcraft, but he was now a little anxious as to what was going to happen next. He realized that in travelling without his rifle he had fairly coaxed the unexpected to happen; and it seemed to him that this particular panther was not going to play by the accepted rules of the game, or he would never have been so audacious as to reveal himself even for that instant in the open trail. He looked down upon his magnificent adversary raging below him, and felt a generous impulse to give him warning of the peril lurking in the undergrowth. As

"His pronged antlers ripped it wide open."

between the elk and the panther, his sympathies were all with the elk, in spite of that misguided beast's extremely inconvenient hostility.

"Instead of stretchin' yer fool neck that way, tryin' to git at *me*," he expostulated, leaning from his branch, "ye'd a sight better be keepin' yer eyes peeled fer yer own hide. There's a durn big painter hidin' somewheres in them bushes yonder, an' while ye're a-clawin' after me—which ain't no use at all—he'll be getting his claws inter *you*, first thing ye know!"

But it was plain that the bull did not understand English, or, at least, McLaggan's primitive variation on English. He seemed to grow more pugnacious than ever at the sound of these mild exhortations. He made the most extravagant efforts to reach McLaggan's refuge with horn or hoof. Convincing himself at last that this was impossible, he glared about him wrathfully till his eyes fell on McLaggan's pack lying near by.

Appearing to regard it as part of McLaggan, he fell upon it triumphantly. His edged hoofs slashed it and smashed it, his pronged antlers ripped it wide open, and in a dozen

seconds he had sent the contents flying in every direction. The contents were miscellaneous, as McLaggan had been in to the Settlement for the purpose of replenishing his stores. They included, among other items, a two-gallon tin of molasses, a little tin of pepper enveloped in a flaring scarlet label, a white cotton bag of flour, a paper bag of beans, and another of sugar. The beans and the sugar went all abroad at the first attack, the big and the little tin rolled away, and the bull devoted his attention for a moment to the bag of flour. He ripped it wide open with his antlers, then blew into it scornfully so that the flour puffed up into his face. Having accomplished all this with such surprising ease, he seemed to think he might now succeed in getting at McLaggan himself. He came under the branch once more and glared upwards through what looked like a pair of white goggles, so thickly were his eye-sockets rimmed with flour. He snorted fresh defiance through wide red nostrils nicely fringed with white.

McLaggan was now too angry to appreciate the extraordinary appearance of his foe. At the scattering of his precious supplies, his

sympathies had gone over completely to the panther. He spat down upon his adversary in impotent indignation.

"I hope the painter'll git ye, after all!" he cried, with a bunch of expletives too virile for the cold exposure of the printed page.

In reply, the bull made another earnest effort to reach him. Then, once more disappointed, he returned to the pack to see what further satisfaction he could get out of it.

Finding that there was no resistance left in the beans, the sugar, or the bag of flour, he went after the little scarlet tin of pepper which had been thrown some distance and lay under a neighbouring tree. He slashed it open with a stroke of the hoof, then jabbed it with a prong of his antlers and flung it into the air. It fell on his shoulders, emptying most of its contents into the long hair on the ridge of his neck. Startled at this attack, he jumped around sharply, and was just in the middle of pounding the impertinent thing viciously under foot, when, to his annoyance, he began to sneeze. It was such sneezing as he had never experienced before. He spread his legs wide and

devoted himself to it with all his energies.

This was too much for McLaggan's wrath. He forgot it in an ecstasy of delight. He was just on the point of explosion, when he saw something which made him check himself with a choked expletive.

The panther was creeping out upon a great branch almost over the sneezing bull's head. The next moment it dropped from the branch and fastened teeth and claws in the bull's neck.

The bull was just in the middle of a terrific paroxysm, but the cruel shock of this assault brought him to. With a grunt he bounded into the air, coming down upon all four feet again, stiff-legged like a bucking horse, as if thinking the jar might shake his assailant off. Failing in this, he sprang violently sideways, and at the same time, being a beast of resource, he struck back with the prongs of his antlers by jerking his muzzle sharply upward.

In the meantime the panther was clawing and biting savagely, and seemed likely to maintain his hold in spite of the clever tactics of his adversary. But just at this point the pepper in the bull's mane began to take

irresistible effect, both in eyes and nostrils. The amazed panther let out a screech of protest which ended in a convulsive sneeze. In the midst of this convulsion, the bull side-stepped again with distressing energy, and the panther, half blinded and wholly bewildered, was thrown to the ground. The manœuvre was almost equally disastrous to McLaggan, who, rocking with laughter, all but fell out of his tree.

The moment he had shaken himself clear, the bull, undaunted, whirled and struck like lightning with his formidable fore-hoofs. With equal alertness the panther succeeded in eluding the stroke. He doubled lithely aside and sprang again, seeking to recover his former advantage. But, being half blinded, he fell short and only got a grip with his front claws. As he struggled savagely to make good his hold against the plunging and the thrashing antlers of his antagonist, once more the pepper in his nostrils began to work with power. In spite of his passionate refusal of the gigantic titillation, his head went up in the air, his spine straightened itself out, his jaws and his claws opened, and the huge sneeze ripped

stridently from his lungs. It ended in a screech of rage and disappointment as he found himself once more rolling on the ground, striking out blindly with futile claws.

As he recovered himself, he warily bounced aside, lightly as a loosed spring. But he was not quite quick enough. One of those battering hooves that were playing for him so nimbly caught him on the haunch. It caught him aslant, or it would have shattered the great joint beyond hope of recovery. But it was enough for his catship. With a scream, he darted off beneath a low-branched thicket, ran lamely up another tree, and crept away from the place of his discomfiture by the path of the interlacing branches. He wanted no elk-meat which tasted like that.

The victor stood glaring after him for half a minute, snorting and shaking his triumphant antlers. Then he came and glared up at McLaggan, as much as to say: "Did you see that? That's the way I'd fix you, too, if only you'd come down here and stand up to me!"

As for his cruel wounds on flank and neck, he seemed quite unaware of them. But he

was evidently a little tired, for he made no further attempts to reach McLaggan's refuge.

"You're sure some punkins!" declared McLaggan admiringly, wiping his eyes on his sleeve. "Who'd ever 'a' thought any bull elk could lick a painter *that* quick?"

Scorning to be conciliated by compliment, the bull turned away to see if there was any further damage he could inflict on McLaggan's belongings.

Ah, yes, to be sure, there was the bright, unsullied tin of molasses just where he had hurled it. He pranced over and slashed at it, in spite of McLaggan's appeals, and opened a generous gash, through which the amber-brown stickiness came bulging forth phlegmatically. The bull eyed this phenomenon, and then, scornful of what he could not understand, prodded the can with an eviscerating antler. He prodded it so hard that not only one prong but a tiny projecting fork also went clean through the tin. Then he threw up his head sharply, expecting to toss the wreck into the air.

To his surprise, it refused to be tossed. It just clung where it was, and began to pour

its contents down in a sticky, deliberate stream all over his head and ears and face. He shook his antlers indignantly, and the can thereupon threw wider its suave coils of richness, till they laced his neck and his gashed flank. Finding that the insignificant but obstinate thing would not let go, he lowered his antlers and struck at it indignantly with one of his hinder hoofs. When this attempt proved futile, he fell to rooting and prodding the ground, till the stickiness had gathered a copious tribute of leaves and twigs and dirt. This process not accomplishing his purpose, he lifted his head and glanced about him with a worried air, his faith in his own prowess apparently for the first time shaken.

McLaggan shrieked. He flung both arms and legs about his branch to keep from falling, and clung there gurgling.

At the strange sound of his laughter, the bull returned beneath the branch and gazed up at him, no longer, as it seemed to McLaggan, insolently, but reproachfully.

"Go 'way, durn ye, or ye'll be the death o' me yet!" gasped McLaggan.

Once more the bull's eyes blazed, and

again he shook his antlers in defiance. But, as he did so, the can, now quite empty and resonant, gave forth a hollow clatter. The fire faded from the bull's eyes, and he jumped aside nervously. The can clattered again, still in the same place. The bull jumped yet again and shook his head more violently. The can gave voice more clamorously. At that the courage of the valiant fighter, whom neither rival bull nor panther nor man himself could daunt, melted to skim milk. He broke into panic flight through the bushes, and the hollow protestings of the can kept time to the madness of his going.

McLaggan, with aching ribs, climbed down from his refuge and stood surveying the wreckage of his supplies. There was nothing left worth picking up, except his axe.

"I'm obleeged to ye for leavin' me the axe," said he. "But ye might 'a' took it, an' welcome. The show was worth the price!"

The Eyes in the Bush

LOW over the wide, pallid, almost unruffled expanse of tide a great ghost-grey bird came flapping shoreward heavily. The shore, drowsing under the June sun, was as flat and seemingly as limitless as the sea, except to the right, where the unfenced levels of the grass foamed golden-green along the fringe of the wooded hills. Between the waveless pallor of the water and the windless warm glow of the grass was drawn a narrow riband of copper red—the smooth mud-flats left naked by the tide. Just at the edge of the grass the bleached ribs of an ancient fishing-smack, borne thither years ago in some tempestuous conspiracy of wind and tide, stood up nakedly from the dry red mud, and seemed to beg the leaning grass to cover them. Upon one of these grey ribs the great grey bird alighted, balancing himself

unsteadily for a moment, as if in the last stage of exhaustion, and then settling to an immobility that seemed to make him a portion of the wreck itself.

For the better part of an hour the Grey Visitor never stirred, never ruffled a feather—not even when a gorgeous black-and-red butterfly alighted, with softly fanning wings, within a foot of him ; not even when a desperate mouse, chased by a weasel, squeaked loudly in the grass-roots behind him. The bees and flies kept up a soft hum, the very voice of sleep, among the clover-blossoms scattered through the grass, and the hot scents of the wild parsnip steamed up over the levels like an unseen incense. The still air quivered, glassy clear. Along the other side of the strip of red began a soft, frothy hiss, as the first of the flood-tide came seething back across the flats. A heavy black-and-yellow bumble bee, with a loud, inquiring boom, swung in headlong circles over the wreck, more than once almost brushing the feathers of the motionless stranger. A sudden flock of sand-pipers puffed down along the shore, alighted, piping mellowly, on the mud just beyond the wreck, and flickered grey

and white as they bobbed their stiff little tails up and down in their feeding.

But the great grey owl never moved a feather. For an hour he sat there with fast-shut eyes in the broad blaze of the sunshine, while life crept slowly back along his indomitable but exhausted nerves. An estray from the Polar North, he had been blown far out to sea in a hurricane. Taking refuge on a small iceberg, he had been carried south till the berg, suddenly disintegrating, had forced him to dare the long landward flight. The last of his strength had barely sufficed him to gain the shore and the refuge of this perch upon the ribs of the ancient wreck.

At last he opened his immense round yellow eyes—discs of flaming yellow glass with the pupils contracted to mere pin-heads in the glare of the unshadowed light. Revolving his round, cat-like head very slowly upon his shoulders, as if it were moved by clockwork, he surveyed his strange surroundings. The conspicuousness of his perch and the intensity of the sunlight were distasteful to him. Lifting his wide wings, he hopped down into the interior of the wreck, which was half filled with mud and

débris. Here, though the side-planking was all fallen away, so that prying eyes could see through and through the ribs in every direction, there was yet a sort of seclusion, with some shadow to ease his dazzled eyes.

Having recovered somewhat from his numbing exhaustion, the Grey Visitor became conscious of the pangs of his famine. He sat motionless as before, but now with all his senses on the alert. His ears—so sensitive that he could hear innumerable and tell-tale sounds where a human ear would have perceived nought but a drowsy silence—caught a chorus of rustlings, squeaks, and rushes, which told him that the neighbouring depths of the grass were populous with the mouse folk and their kindred. At one point the grass-fringe came so close to the wreck that its spears were thrusting in between the ribs. The Grey Visitor hopped over to this point, and waited hopefully, like a cat at a frequented mouse-hole.

He had been but a few moments settled in his ambush when a fat, sly-faced water-rat came ambling into the wreck at the other end of the keel, nosing this way and that among the *débris* for sleepy beetles. Keen

as were the rat's eyes, they did not notice the ghost-grey erect figure sitting up like a post beside the grass-fringe. The Visitor waited till the rat should come within reach of an unerring pounce. His sinews stiffened themselves in tense readiness. Then something like a brown wedge dropped out of the sky. There was a choked squeal, and the rat lay motionless under the talons of a mottled brown marsh-hawk, which fell instantly to tearing its victim as if obliged to lunch in a hurry.

The downy wings of the Grey Visitor lifted. His swoop was as soft, soundless and effortless as if he had been but a wisp of feathers blown on a sudden puff of wind. His mighty talons closed on the neck and back of the feasting hawk. There was a moment's convulsive flapping of the mottled brown wings beneath the overshadowing grey ones. Then the stranger set himself voraciously to the first square meal which had come his way for days. When he had finished, there was little left of either the hawk or the water-rat.

The Visitor wiped the black sickle of his beak on a block of driftwood, glared about

him, and then rose softly into the air. He wanted a darker and more secluded place than the ribs of the wreck for his siesta. Along the foot of the uplands to the right he marked a patch of swamp, sown with sedgy pools and clumps of dense bushes. Just at its edge towered a group of three immense water-poplars, whose tops he decided would serve him as a post of outlook for his night hunting. For the moment, however, it was close covert which he wanted, where he could escape the glare of the sun and sleep off his great meal. Flying low over the grass-tops, and ignoring the hushed rustle of unseen scurriers beneath, he winnowed down the shore to the swamp and plunged into the heart of the leafiest thicket. A half-rotted stump, close to the ground, offered him an inviting perch, and in half a minute he was the soundest-sleeping grey owl on this side the Arctic Circle.

Some little time after, a fussy red-winged blackbird came bustling into the thicket, perhaps to hunt for drowsy night-moths asleep on the under sides of the twigs. He alighted on a branch about two feet from the Grey Visitor's head, and stared imper-

tinently at the spectral, motionless shape. As he stared, a pair of immense round eyes, brass yellow and terrible, opened wide upon him. For one petrified second he stared straight into them. Then, recovering the use of his wits, he fell backwards off his branch with a protesting squeak, and fluttered out from the bush that held such horrors. The Grey Visitor turned his head slowly, to see if there were any more such intruders upon his solitude, then tranquilly went to sleep again.

It was perhaps a half-hour later when a big black mink came poking his pointed nose into the thicket. His malicious eyes, set close together in his cruel, triangular face, detected at once the sleeping form of the Grey Visitor, and glowed deeply as if all at once transformed to drops of garnet. His first impulse was to hurl himself straight upon the slumberer's throat. But, fearless and joyous slaughterer though he was, there was something in this grey shape that made him hesitate. He had never before seen an owl of this ghostly colour, or of even half this size. His long, low, sinuous body gliding almost like a snake's, he slipped up to within

a couple of feet of the sleeper, and paused irresolute.

To the mink's own ear, keen as it was, his motion was as soundless as a moving shadow. But the ear of the owl is a miracle of sensitiveness. In the deep of his sleep the Grey Visitor heard some warning of danger. Just as the mink was gathering his lithe muscles for a spring, a pair of immense, palely blazing discs opened before his face with a light so sudden, so bright, and so hard that he recoiled in spite of himself.

The Grey Visitor had no need of thought to tell him that the long, black creature before him, with the narrow snarling mouth and venomous eyes, was dangerous. His instinct worked quicker than thought. His wings spread, and he rose as if lifted by a breath from beneath. Then he dipped instantly and struck downwards with his knife-like, clutching talons. In the same moment the mink sprang to meet the attack, lengthening out his elastic body prodigiously and reaching for his adversary's throat.

But what the mink did not know was his undoing. He did not know that the deep covering on the Grey Visitor's throat and

breast—firm, close-lying feathers and a lavish padding of down—was an armour too thick and resistant for even his keen teeth. He got a choking mouthful of feathers. He even achieved to scratch the skin beneath and draw blood. Then his savage jaws stretched wide in a choking screech as the steel talons closed inexorably on his throat and his slim loins, and the fiery light in his brain went out in a flame of indignation, amazed that it in turn should suffer the fate which it had so continually and so implacably inflicted.

The Grey Visitor was already hungry again by this time, for an owl's digestion is astonishingly swift. He made a good meal, therefore, upon the flesh of the mink, though that flesh is so tough, so stringy, and so rank that few other flesh-eaters will deign to touch it unless in the extremity of famine. Then he went to sleep again, for he had long arrears to make up, and the hot glow of afternoon was still heavy on the reaches of sea and grass.

But just after sunset, when the glow had faded, and the first thin wave of lilac and amber came washing coolly over the wide

"And the fiery light in his brain went out."

landscape, and the blossoms gave out new scents at the touch of the dew, and the night-hawks twanged in the pale green upper heaven, then the Grey Visitor awoke to eager activity. He floated upwards from out his covert like a ghost from a pool, circled over it twice, and flew off to those high and lonely tree-tops which he had marked in the earlier part of the day.

In the nearest tree, not far from the top, was what looked like an immense accumulation of dead sticks. To the Grey Visitor, coming from a region so far north that there were no tall tree-tops, this dark mass had no significance. In his world of the Arctic barrens nothing of the nature of a nest would ever be built in such an exposed position, where the first icy hurricane screaming down from the Pole would rip it to shreds. Therefore it never occurred to him that the clumsy platform of dead sticks was the nest of a pair of blue herons. In fact, he had no idea that any such creature as a blue heron existed. He flew noiselessly to the very top of the tree and perched there some ten or a dozen feet above the dusky platform of sticks.

All the wide, glimmering twilight world

beneath him was very still and quiet. Nothing seemed astir but the two or three night-hawks swooping and twanging high up in the hollow heaven, and he had no thought of hunting any such elusive quarry as the night-hawks. With a view to startling some wary hiders into activity, he opened his beak and gave utterance to an unearthly screeching hoot. As he did so, there was a sharp movement on the platform of sticks, and a keen, defiant eye looked up at him. He discerned instantly that the platform of sticks was a nest, and that an immense bird, with an astonishingly long head and bill, was sitting upon it.

In his own desolate north the great grey owl knew that no creature on wings could rival him. He was the undisputed tyrant of the Polar air, even the dashing, white chocolate-mottled hawk-owl flying precipitately before him. It never occurred to him that this straight-billed nester could be in any way dangerous. He dropped down upon her quite casually, as upon a sure and easy victim.

But, before he was within striking distance, the narrow head of the heron was drawn

far back between her shoulders, and the long straight javelin of her bill presented its point directly toward the attack.

The Grey Visitor noted what a weapon confronted him, and paused warily. In the next instant the snaky neck of the heron uncoiled itself and the javelin bill darted up at him like lightning. It was a false stroke on the heron's part, for her assailant was not quite within reach. But the Grey Visitor took note of the deadly possibilities of that darting bill, and promptly sailed a little further out of its range.

But he was only warned, not daunted. For several minutes he circled slowly just above the nest, now approaching, now retiring, while he pondered the unaccustomed problem. And all the time the heron, her head drawn back between her hunched shoulders, watched his flight unwinkingly, and kept her menacing point at guard. On the flexible coil of her neck her head pivoted perfectly, and from whichever quarter the enemy approached, there was that fiery yellow point always confronting him, waiting to dart upward and meet him full in the breast.

Suddenly he swooped again. Up came that darting stroke to meet him. But he did not meet it. Swerving craftily, he caught the stroke in his wing feathers and smothered it, buffeting it down. With a harsh *quah-ah* of despair, the heron strove to regain her position for another stroke. But already her adversary had his clutch upon her throat. A moment more and the long neck straightened out, and the narrow head hung limply over the edge of the nest. The eggs, crushed in the struggle, oozed slowly down through the loose foundations of the platform, and the great grey owl began to tear greedily at the most lavish banquet his hunting had ever won him.

But Nature is apt to deal remorselessly with the unprepared. And the Grey Visitor, not being at home with his surroundings, had neglected to prepare for the return of the dead mother's mate. Busy at his feasting, he failed to notice at first the flapping of heavy wings. When he did notice it, he looked up sharply, his beak dripping, his round, pallid face dappled with blood. The tall cock-heron was just settling upon the edge of the platform. His head was drawn back

between his shoulders, behind the long yellow lance of his bill, and his eyes, hard as jewels, met those of the murderer without any expression of rage or fear or hate. They were as unchanging as the gemmed eyes of an idol.

The Grey Visitor sprang into the air, in order to give battle on more advantageous terms. But this time he sprang a little too slowly. The heron's head darted downwards at him, as if spearing a frog. The stroke caught him full in the wing-elbow, splitting it and totally disabling him for flight. With a hiss of fury, he pounced at his stilt-legged antagonist, striking out frantically with his terrific, clutching talons. But his trailing wing jerked him sideways, so that he utterly missed his aim and sprawled at the heron's feet. Before he could recover himself, the avenger struck again with the full drive of his powerful neck, and the stroke went home. The Grey Visitor dropped in a heap, with the javelin bill clean through his throat. His round yellow eyes opened and shut several times, and his beak snapped like a pair of castanets. Then he lay quite still, while the heron, standing at full

height on the edge of the outraged nest, stabbed repeatedly and with slow deliberation at the unresisting mass of shadowy feathers.

The Runners of the High Peaks

MOTIONLESS upon his knife-edged pinnacle the great brown ram stood poised, his grey, uplifted muzzle out-thrust toward the sunrise as if he would sniff in its rose-red glories as they flamed across the ice peaks of the jagged horizon. The enormous corrugated spirals of his horns lay back over his neck and shoulders as he stood, and his arrogant eyes of black and gold appeared half shut as they searched the jumble of peaks, ravines, and lake-dotted valleys outspread in still confusion beneath him. The silence in his ears was absolute, save for the occasional throb of thunder from a waterfall leaping out into the light of dawn a thousand feet below, and heard only when some wandering eddy of air pulsed upward from the depths. There was no enemy to be descried, either in the still shadowed valleys or on the

brightening slopes and steeps ; but the stately watcher kept his station, immovable, staring as if physically hypnotised by the immensity of the vision that filled his eyes. Then at last a white-headed eagle, passing low overhead, yelped at him defiantly. He paid no attention to the challenge, but the harsh, thin cry seemed to break his trance. He dropped his head and glanced down at the narrow table-like ledge just below his pinnacle, where another ram, smaller and less splendidly horned than himself, with six little spike-horned ewes, cropped the short sweet grasses which grew in the clefts of the rock.

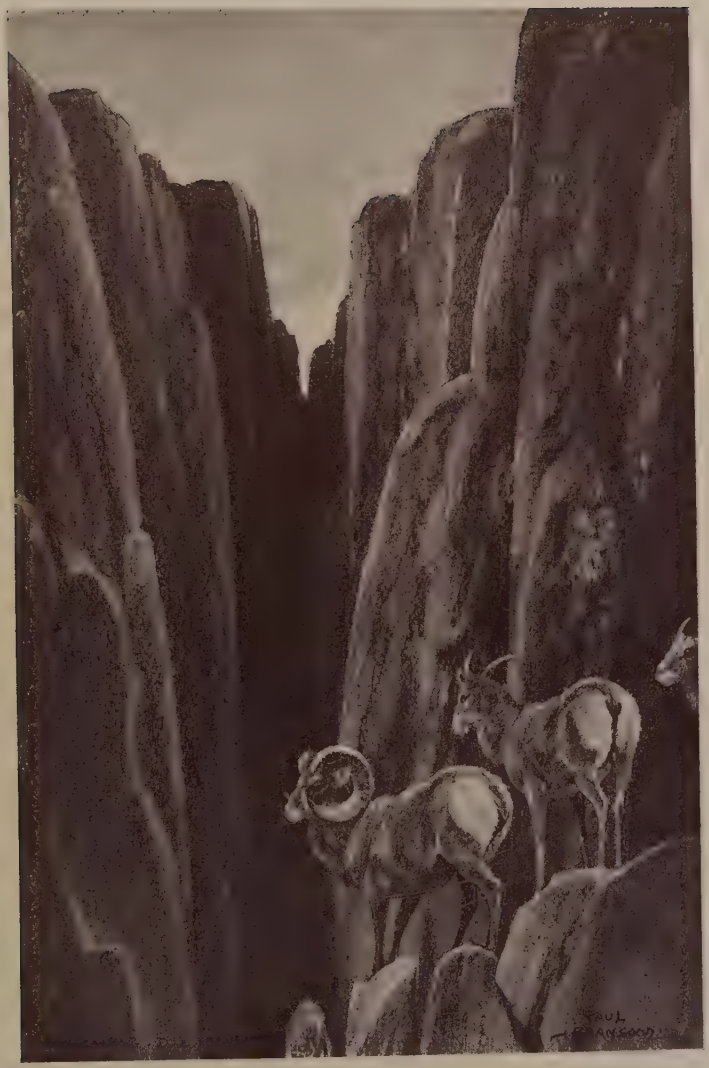
Far down in the shadow beneath the wild ram's peak a white tent glimmered beside the misty coils of the stream which threaded the valley. It was quite too far off to give the ram any concern. Even his sagacious and penetrating vision could barely make out that a man had stepped forth from under the tent-flap and now stood motionless beside it. His confidence would have gone to pieces in uncomprehended terror had he known that the man, with a pair of powerful glams to his eyes, was studying him minutely, and could see him as clearly as

if he were not more than a couple of hundred yards away.

Pete Allen was prospecting. Smitten with the wander lust, he had struck clear across the continent from the spruce woods and rich river meadows of New Brunswick to the gigantic mountain chaos of the Rockies in British Columbia. In New Brunswick he had been a hunter and guide. Now he had forsaken the trails of moose and bear and caribou to seek the elusive "colour" in the sands of the mountain streams, or the unobtrusive outcrop of the quartz that carries gold. But the old instincts were still strong in him. He felt the lure of a splendid and unknown quarry. He coveted the magnificent head of that calm watcher on the peak; and, having heard that the wild mountain ram of the Rockies was an extraordinarily difficult quarry to bring down, he itched to try his old eastern woodcraft in this new chase and win the prize unaided. He had two Indians with him as carriers, but he was determined that they should have no part in this hunting. After he had well studied, through his glasses, the lay of the ridges and ravines about the peak where the ram was

standing, he re-entered the tent for his rifle. He stuffed some cold meat and hard tack into his pockets, told his Indians they need not expect him back before night, and started up the course of a small stream which seemed to come from the shoulder of the mountain. As soon as he plunged into the thickets, he lost sight of the watcher on the peak ; but he had laid his course, and he pushed on confidently, working around the mountain so that he might come upon the quarry with the sun at his back. When, after an hour's hard work, pushing through matted thickets and crossing jagged gullies, he came out upon a knoll which commanded a view of the peak, he saw that the great ram had disappeared. But this did not trouble him, as he felt sure he would pick up the trail in course of time.

Up on the high ledge below the peak the spring grass was sweet, but there was little of it. The mountain sheep, cropping hungrily with their short, eager bites, soon exhausted their high pasturage. They lifted their heads discontentedly, whereupon the old ram, whose supercilious eyes nevertheless missed little of what concerned him, stepped mincingly down from his pinnacle. Between



"He took no pains to choose an easy path."

the edged summit and the ledge where his flock pastured was an all but perpendicular drop of smooth-faced rock. Smooth as it looked, however, his dainty and discriminating hoofs were able to find some unevennesses upon it, for he took it in two effortless leaps, and landed among his followers with a shake of his splendid horns. Then he led the way down the naked steep, now flooded with the level radiance of the three-fourths risen sun, toward the fresh spring pasturage along the upper limits of the timber-belt.

He took no pains to choose an easy path, this light-foot runner of the aerial peaks. Along dizzy ledges that looked no more than a track for lizards or a clinging place for swallows, he led the way without pause or hesitation, the flock in single file at his heels. From ledge to ledge he dropped, over hair-raising deeps of transparent air, with a precision and ease that made it seem as if his sturdy frame was as imponderable as the air itself. He ploughed down chutes and funnels of loose stone, the *débris* of the rock walls above. He sprang carelessly over crevices whose bottoms were lost in blackness, till at last the young-leaved birch and the

sombre pointed fir lay just below him, skirted by the steep ribands and intersected by the narrow glens of greening turf.

At this point the wise old ram began to go warily. In this remote corner of the Rockies the hunter's rifle was as yet practically unknown. On the ultimate heights, therefore, where none could follow him but the eagles and the falcons, he had no enemies to keep watch against. For the eagles he had small concern, except just at lambing-time, and even then each ewe mother, with her short, spiky horns and nimble, razor-edged hoofs, was quick and able to protect her own little one. But down here, along the edge of the timber, were the dreaded enemies—the wolves, the mountain lions, the black bears, and the grizzlies. The temptation of the new grass was one not to be resisted, but the price of it was an unsleeping watchfulness of eye and ear and wits.

The uppermost fringe of grass, where it thinned away into the broken rock, was scanty and stunted; but here the great horned leader elected to do his own pasturing, while the younger ram stood guard. The spot was a safe one, being several hundred

yards from the timber, and bounded along its upper edge by a broken steep, which offered no obstacle whatever to these light-footed peak-runners, but was all but impassable, except at a crawl, to the most agile of their foes. If the gaunt grey timber-wolf should come darting, belly to earth, from the woods, for all his swiftness the flock would be bounding lightly far up the steep, as if lifted on a sudden wind, before he could come anywhere within reach of them.

When he had quite satisfied his own hunger, and with lifted nostrils sniffed suspiciously every air that drew upward from the woods, the old ram led his flock further down into one of those steep glens where the grass was more abundant. Or, rather, instead of leading them, he shepherded them before him, keeping them all under his eye, and himself guarding the rear, while the oldest and wariest of the ewes, prick-eared and all a-quiver with suspicion, led the way, questioning every bush and every shadow. But there was no hint of danger anywhere to be discerned; and presently the flock was pasturing greedily on such sweet herbage as they had not tasted since the previous year,

while on a hummock near the bottom of the glade, at the post of danger, the ram kept watch, turning his head continually.

But enthusiasm over young pasturage may make even a mountain sheep absent-minded. From time to time the flock straggled. Straightway it would close up again, drawing away from the thickets. Then, in a minute or two more, it would open out fan-wise, as each impatient feeder followed up some vein of especially luscious herbage. Just at the point where the slope of grass was intersected by another and narrower glade, almost at right angles to the first, a heedless young ewe had branched off a score or so of paces to one side, up the cross-glade. Lifting her head suddenly, she realized her isolation, and started to rejoin her fellows.

At that same instant a lean, grey shape shot noiselessly from the underbush straight in her path, and leaped at her with wide jaws. With a bleat of terror, she sprang back up the cross-glade; and then, frantic at the prospect of being cut off from the flock, she wheeled again and tried to dodge past her assailant. The wolf, understanding her tactics, and absolutely sure that she could

not escape him, headed her off without too violently exerting himself. He knew that here, away from her steeps and pinnacles, she was no match for him in speed, and he knew, too, that, once she saw herself deserted by the flock, her powers would fail her in sheer panic. For a few seconds he almost played with her. Then, getting her fairly cornered in a bend of the thickets, he sprang savagely for her throat.

Behind him, meanwhile, the flock went bounding by, headed for their high refuge. Last came the great ram, snorting with wrath and fear. Just as he was passing, he saw that final rush of the wolf. He saw the young ewe penned in her corner. He heard her shrill, despairing bleat. The look of fear faded from his yellow eyes, leaving the rage only. It was not his wont to pit himself against the mighty timber-wolf, because he had no morbid taste for suicide, but this young ewe was a favourite. Just as the gnashing jaws were about to snap upon the victim's neck, something not unlike the stroke of a pile-driver caught the wolf fairly on the crupper. Aided by his own spring, it lifted him clean over the struggling ewe's

back, doubled him together, and dashed him with stunning effect against a tree. Slowly he picked himself up, to see his quarry and the great ram just vanishing up the glade, far beyond any such pursuit as he was at the moment equal to. With a shamefaced air, he glanced about him. There, across the glade, stood a tawny puma, eyeing his discomfiture through narrowed lids. This was too much. Tucking his tail between his legs, he slunk off into the underbush.

Having gained what he considered a safe height among the rocks, the ram halted his followers upon a jutting buttress, where they stood huddled about him, and stared down resentfully upon the grassy glades. Such was their confidence in their lord, and in their own powers of flight, that they were none of them particularly frightened, except the young ewe who had had such a narrow escape. She, trembling and with panting sides, crowded close against her rescuer, who, for his part, kept scrutinizing the edges of the timber to see if the enemy were going to follow up the attack. He saw no more of that enemy, but he caught a glimpse of the tawny form of the puma gliding into a

tree. Thereupon he decided that this part of the mountain was no place for his flock.

He turned and made off straight up the steep, till he had put a good mile between himself and the point of danger. Then, dropping into a ravine till their course was quite hidden from all hostile eyes in the timber, he led the way around the mountain-side for several miles. On a high ledge, secure from any unseen approach, the flock rested for an hour or two, chewing the cud in peace in the vast silence of the bare and sun-bathed peaks. When once more they descended to the timber-belt and its seductive pasturage, there were three or four miles of tangled ridge and ravine between them and the scene of their morning's adventure.

In the meantime, Pete Allen, weary with climbing, sore with disappointment, tormented with as many flies as his own New Brunswick backwoods would have let loose upon him at the worst of the season, was beginning to wonder if the hunt of the mountain sheep was as simple an affair as he had fancied it. After climbing all the morning, he had failed to gain another glimpse of the great

brown ram. At last, however, about noon, he came upon their trail, leading down to the grass. With a long breath of relief, he stopped, drank at a bubbling icy spring, ate his cold bacon and crackers, and smoked a pipe. The trail was none too fresh, so he knew there was nothing to be gained by rash haste. After his pipe, he followed the trail down to the glades. His trained eyes soon told him what had happened. The encounter with the wolf was an open page to him. Having satisfied himself that there was nothing of interest left in that patch of timber—though all the while the puma was eyeing him with curious interest from a great branch not far overhead—he took up the trail of the flock's flight, and started once more up the mountain. Sweating heavily, and angrily brushing the flies from his eyes and nose and ears, he managed to distinguish the trail for a couple of miles along the difficult ravines, but at last, at the root of a precipice which, in his eastern judgment, was quite impassable to anything without wings, he lost it irretrievably.

Arguing that the flock must sooner or later return to their pasturage, he picked his

way on a long diagonal down the mountain-side, traversed a succession of grass-patches, which showed never a trace of hoof-print, and at length found himself in a bewildering maze of low, abrupt ridges, dense thickets, and narrow strips of green glade.

From all that Allen had been able to gather as to the habits of mountain sheep, he concluded that this was about the last place in the world where he would be likely to find them. He began, after long self-restraint, to curse softly under his breath, as he glared about him for the most practical exit from the maze. All at once his face changed. The anger faded out from his shrewd light-blue eyes. There was the trail of the flock leading straight down the steepest and most uninviting of the glens. It was a fresh trail, too—so absolutely fresh that some of the trodden blades were still lifting their heads slowly from the hoof-prints.

"Gee!" muttered Allen. "Seems I don't know 's much about these here critters as I thought I did!" And he slipped noiselessly back into the cover of a thicket.

His problem now was to keep the trail in sight while himself remaining under cover.

It was the hardest piece of tracking he had ever tackled. The cover was dense, the slope steep and tormentedly broken. He had to be noiseless as a mink, because he knew by hearsay that the ears of the mountain ram were almost as keen as an owl's. And he had to keep himself perfectly out of sight, which forced him to take the most difficult part of the underbrush for his path. But, for all this, he was no longer angry; he no longer heeded the flies or the heat, and when the sweat streamed down into his eyes, he merely wiped them cheerfully on his sleeve. He felt sure now of winning the longed-for trophy of that magnificent head, and of winning it, moreover, by his own unaided woodcraft. Presently, through an opening in the leafy screen, he caught a glimpse of a tranquilly pasturing ewe, not much more than two hundred yards away. She moved slowly across his narrow line of vision and vanished. Keyed now to the highest pitch of anticipation, with every faculty concentrated on his purpose, he worked his silent way onward, expecting momently to gain a view of the great ram.

But there was an element in the situation

which, had he known it, would have interfered with Allen's concentration of purpose. He was not the only hunter of mountain sheep in that particular corner of the mountains.

A shaggy and sly old "silver-tip," as it chanced, had had his eye for some time on that flock. He loved mutton, and he knew it was very hard to get, especially for a bear. He was making his approaches, therefore, with a stealthy craft surpassing that of Pete Allen himself. So it came about quite naturally that he saw Allen first. Thereupon, he took every precaution that Allen should not see him.

In this remote district the grizzlies had not yet learned the vital lesson that man is by far the most formidable of all the animals. Yet a rumour had come to him, somehow, that the insignificant creature was not to be trifled with. There was something masterful in his bearing—as the grizzly had observed from safe ambush on several occasions—which suggested unknown powers, and hitherto the old silver-tip, being well fed and having no special grudge against man, had refrained from courting a quarrel.

Now, however, he was angry. This was his own game which the man was stalking. This was a trespass upon his own preserves—a point in regard to which the grizzly is apt to be sensitive. His first impulse was to rush upon the intruder at once. Then a mixture of prudence and curiosity held him back, or, rather, delayed his purpose. He changed his course, and began to stalk Pete Allen even as Pete Allen was stalking the sheep. And high overhead, in the unclouded blue, a soaring eagle, catching brief glimpses of the drama through the openings in the leafage, gazed down upon it with unwinking, scornful eyes.

Huge and apparently clumsy as was the bulk of the bear, he nevertheless made his way through the tangle as soundlessly as the man, and more swiftly. He drew gradually nearer, and, as he approached, he began to forget the other game in a savage interest in this new and dangerous quarry. He was not directly behind the man, but now drawing nearly abreast of him, on the other side of the narrow steep of grass. He was just beginning, indeed, to stiffen his sinews instinctively for the final rush which should

avenge the intrusion upon his range, when he saw the man stop abruptly and raise something that looked like a long brown stick to his shoulder. At this sight the bear stopped also, his wrath not being yet quite hot enough to consume his curiosity.

Pete Allen at last had caught a clear view of the great brown ram standing at guard not a hundred yards away. It was a beautiful, easy shot, the target isolated and framed in green. He raised his rifle steadily, bracing himself with knees and feet in a precarious position. Before he could draw a bead, however, to his amazement he saw the ram bound into the air and vanish from his narrow field of vision. Puzzled, he lowered the rifle from his shoulder. As he did so, that unknown and quite incalculable sense which seems to have its seat in the fine hairs on the back of one's neck and in the skin of the cheeks commanded him to turn his head. He was just in time to see the giant form of the grizzly burst from the underbrush and come lunging across the strip of open.

Confronted by such an emergency, the New Brunswicker fired on the instant, and, being quite sure of himself, and the bear

above him, he took a difficult shot. He aimed at the middle of the beast's throat, trusting to sever the spinal column, for he had heard that a shot straight through the heart often fails to stop the rush of a grizzly.

There was nothing the matter with Pete Allen's shooting or with his nerve. But at the very fraction of a second when his finger started to pull the trigger, the whimsical Fates of the wilderness took a hand in the game. They undermined Pete Allen's footing. As he fired he fell, and the long, soft-nosed, deadly bullet, instead of piercing the grizzly's spine, merely smashed through his right shoulder.

Pete Allen fell sprawling some eight or ten feet down the slope, losing hold of his rifle in the effort to stop himself. To his anxious indignation, he saw the rifle strike a branch and bounce perversely a dozen feet away. He scrambled for it furiously; but, before he could quite get his grip upon it, it slipped through the branches and dropped another dozen feet or so. At the same time, with something more near cold terror than he had ever before experienced, he saw the

dark bulk of the grizzly wallowing down upon him, huge as a mountain. Staggered for a few seconds by the shock of the bullet, the beast had hesitated and turned around on his tracks, biting at the wound. Then, on three legs, and grunting with rage, he had launched himself upon his adversary.

In the course of the next three seconds, as he struggled towards his gun, Pete Allen thought of a thousand things, mostly unimportant. But at the back of his brain was the cool conviction that this was the time when he was going to pass in his checks. Those brute paws would smash him before he could reach his rifle. But he was wrong, for again the whimsical Fates interfered, perceiving a chance for such a trick as they had probably never played before.

The great brown ram, his eyes nearly starting from his head, came leaping madly up the narrow incline, his flock at his heels, blind with fright. In the glade below, one of the flock had just been pounced upon by a puma, and another puma had sprung out at them, but missed his kill. The ram saw the bear straight in his path, plunging across it. There was no time to change his direc-

tion, and in his panic the peril in front was nothing to compare with the peril behind. Had the bear been a mastodon or a megatherium, it would have been all the same to the panic-stricken ram. With the madness of utter terror, he lowered his mighty head and charged this dark mass that barred his flight.

The bear, blazing with vengeance, had no eyes in that moment for sheep. Suddenly something like a falling boulder crashed into his ribs, catching him with his fore feet off the ground and almost rolling him over. The breath belched out of his astonished lungs with a loud, coughing grunt, and the ram went over him, spurning him with sharp hoofs. The next moment the whole flock was passing over him, a bewildering bombardment of small, keen, battering hoofs and woolly bodies. Recovering from his amazement, he struck out with his unwounded forepaw, caught the last unhappy ewe as she went over him, and hurled her carcass, mangled and quivering, far down the slope. Then, a little dazed, but undeterred from his vengeance, he glared about him for his original antagonist.

Interesting and, indeed, unparalleled as the intervention of the brown ram had been, Pete Allen had not taken time to observe it with the minute care which so novel an incident was entitled to. He had been busy getting his gun. Now he had it, he did not hurry. With this shot he was taking no chances. Just as the bear caught sight of him, and started at him open-mouthed, he fired, and the animal sprawled forward, a huge furry heap, with a ball through the base of his brain.

Back in New Brunswick, Pete Allen had had the name of being a cool hand in a corner. In that land of tried woodsmen and daring stream-drivers, he would not have gained that name without deserving it. Even as the grizzly was in the act of falling forward, Allen raised his rifle again. He covered accurately the form of the brown ram leaping up the slope a hundred yards away. There was his trophy, the splendid horns which he had striven so hard to win, within his grasp at last. But something seemed to tug suddenly at his arm—or was it at his heart? Pete Allen had always prided himself on playing fair, in the spirit as well as in the

letter. He dropped his rifle with a growl of vexation.

"It'd be a dirty trick to put a ball into yeh," he muttered, "seein' what a hell of a hole you've just pulled me out of!"

The Pool

THE current that went circling through its depths, keeping them always crystal pure and sweet, was so leisurely that the clear brown mirror of the surface was never broken, unless by some slow-wandering foam-cluster eddied in from the frothy little falls outside, or by the dropping of a leaf, or by the sluggish rise of a trout to some unwary skimming fly.

To the fish that dwelt in it the pool was an abiding place of perfection. It was deep; but the entrance to it was narrow and shoal, just spacious enough for the slow interchange of waters with the vivifying outer current. At the same time this entrance was so set that innumerable choice morsels, fly and beetle, grub and berry, having been battered down over the falls, were then persuasively swept into it. It was darkly overhung by great-limbed water-ash and maple; but when the

sun was some two or three hours past noon its down-pour reached and flooded the surface and made very wholesome basking. The bottom, moreover, offered a judicious variety of attraction. For some way in from the entrance it was of a clean bright sand, more or less broken with stones. While the inner portion, right up to the perpendicular banks and the jutting tree-roots, was floored with silted mud, fruitful in the small, ephemeral water-growths of herb and insect.

The fish inhabiting the delectable pool were all big ones, except for a few scattered young-fry which dwelt precariously in the extremest shallows where the big ones could not come at them. And the fish were of just two kinds, the trout and the suckers. The suckers, lazy, pig-like, inoffensive beings, congregated over the stretch of mud, from whose fat surface their small, round, defenceless, downward-opening mouths sucked up their sustenance incessantly. Their bulk, and the power of their sinewy tails, alone protected them from the trout, whose wide, rapacious jaws and insatiable appetite were effective in keeping the size of all the pool-dwellers up to standard.

The trout, as a rule, had none of the repose-fulness of the suckers. They ranged restlessly, now over the mud reaches, now over the sand and rocks, wherever quarry, large or small, might perhaps be encountered. Frequently one or another would flash out through the narrow exit, to hunt and test its strength in the bright turmoil of the rapids. And from time to time one would return lazily, perhaps with the tail of a smaller relation sticking out of its mouth, and settle down under the bank to digest its heavy meal.

To the pair of great fish-hawks, whose huge, untidy nest, like a cart-load of sticks and rubbish, filled the top of a tall dead pine-tree half a mile above the falls, the pool was a ceaseless aggravation. In the continual flight up and down stream their keen eyes were wont to search the pool enviously. But the big fish swimming so calmly in its depths were safe from them, because it was so over-hung that they were unable to swoop down upon it with any effective speed. In the clear open they could drop like a wedge of steel, and flick up a darting trout from the very lip of the fall. But the pool they could reach only by a deliberate, flapping approach

which gave even the drowsiest basker ample time to seek refuge in the safe depths.

But there was one wild fisherman whom the pool suited exactly. A big half-submerged root, jutting out for about three feet directly over that section of the pool where the suckers congregated, afforded the great lynx just the post of vantage which he loved. Here he would lie in wait for an hour at a time, patient and immobile as the root on which he crouched. His round, black, savage moon-face, with its pale eyes bright and hard, its stiff whiskers, and its tufted ears, would be held down so close to the glassy surface that the confused reflections of the overhanging branches were unable to interfere with his vision, and he could see with perfect clearness every detail of the transparent depths. He would stare with endless craving at the massive suckers which lay placidly mouthing the mud; but nothing could ever bring them near the surface, so he knew nothing of them but that they were fat and looked very desirable.

But it was the trout that chiefly concerned him. They had none of the fat placidity of the suckers. One or another of them, with his gold and silver and vermilion glinting up

through the pellucid gloom, would be for ever on the move, quartering the bottom for caddis and beetle, and now and then sailing up towards the surface to investigate some floating atom that may chance to be a fly. Sometimes it *was* a fly, or a moth, or a caterpillar or some edible berry. And sometimes too, the slow circling of the current in the pool would bring it close to that still watcher on the root before it caught the eye of the feeding fish. Then the sinews of the watcher would grow rigid, his claws protrude from their sheathes, a little green flame flicker spectrally in his eyes. As the trout came slanting up on scarlet fin, shouldered the surface apart, and sucked down the morsel, out from the root above him would flash a wide-taloned paw, unerring, inescapeable, scooping him from his element, and in half a second he would be flopping convulsively among the wintergreen leaves, far up the bank. In the next half of that fatal second the lynx would be upon him with an exultant pounce, holding down his slippery struggles with both fore-paws, and biting through the back of his massive neck.

The lynx being so silent and discreet a

fisherman, his fishing never disturbed the pool at all, or cast any shadow of doubt upon its reputation as a haven of security and repose. The victim simply vanished, without any fuss. Of the other dwellers in the pool not one knew how he had vanished ; not one cared ; not one was troubled with apprehension.

One hot morning as the great cat lay on the root, staring down into the depths with his fierce moon eyes, he was disappointed to observe that on this particular day even the trout were too indolent to stir. The heat seemed to have taken away their appetites. As motionless and indifferent as the suckers themselves, they hung on softly fanning fins, and took no notice when even the most tempting morsels traversed the glassy surface. They did not mingle with the suckers, but poised themselves superciliously a foot or so above them, or lurked singly under the shelter of the scattered rocks on the bottom. In vain did fly or moth, or the most seductive squirmer of a fat grub, come circling slowly over the surface above them. They would not so much as cock a scornful eye up at it. They were not feeding. And when

a trout won't feed, he just won't, and there's an end of it. Though just when the pangs of appetite may come back upon him with a rush, no fisherman can say with certainty. It is such uncertainty that has taught fishermen the virtues of patience and hope. It has also taught them unveracity, by giving them abundant time for the weaving of tales wherewith to amuse the credulous.

The lynx, as a fisherman, was both hopeful and patient. But this morning his patience was being sorely tried; for he was hungrier than usual, and his hunger was particularly bent on fish. His ridiculous stump of a tail, which was quite hidden from the sight of the pool-dwellers, began to twitch angrily. He was almost on the point of giving up, and stealing away to hunt rabbits, when from the corner of his eye he caught sight of something which made his ruff bristle and every hair stand up in jealous wrath. An intruder, a stranger, a rival whose skill as a fisherman made his own attempts seem nothing worth, had arrived at the entrance of the pool and was peering down into it with keen eyes.

The lynx moved, for the first time in a half-hour. He turned his head full round,

and fixed his green, implacable stare upon the intruder.

The new arrival had come by way of the river, and, from his bearing, the pool was evidently new to him. His long, sinuous, dark body lay crouched in the middle of the entrance, hinder half in the water and head and shoulders out of it. Sleek and glistening, with his low-set supple form, heavy-jawed and almost dog-like face, inconspicuous ears, dark eyes, and long, powerful tail, he presented the sharpest possible contrast in type to the great, shadowy, moon-eyed cat, though in actual weight and bulk the two were not greatly dissimilar.

But it was not at the silent watcher on the tree-root across the pool that the other was looking. He was peering down, with exultant eyes, into the peopled depths. Hunting had been bad, and he was hungry. A moment more and he plunged downward with a heavy swirl, but smoothly, as if oiled. The eyes of the lynx followed, with savage intentness, his swift and fish-like dartings beneath the water.

The drowsing pool-dwellers awoke and scattered in a panic, even the dull suckers

displaying a miraculous agility. But it was not the coarse-fleshed suckers that this discriminating fisherman was after.

As the frantic fugitives dashed this way and that, weaving strange patterns over the bottom, and half forgetful, in their terror, of the narrow way out to safety, the otter slashed at such as came in his way, biting through their backbones, so that they presently rolled to the surface, belly upward. But it was the biggest trout of the pool that he wanted.

And one great fish there was who was fatally supreme. His supremacy had been fatal to many smaller fish before. Now it was fatal to himself. Him the otter chose out for his prize. Feeling himself so chosen, he flashed frantically from side to side, and up and down, ever missing the exit—or cleverly headed off from it—but also, for some minutes, evading the inexorable pursuit. The otter, though a four-footed land-dweller, was really more swift and agile in the water than any trout; but over and over again he was baulked or delayed by other maddened fugitives getting in his way, or tempting him to delay for a slashing bite.

Through all the lashed turmoil the lynx

never stirred, save to follow with his hard bright stare the lightning evolutions of the flight and the pursuit. At last the doomed trout flashed up beneath the point of the root, and doubled just at the surface. In that fraction of a second when he seemed to pause for the turn, down swept the furry paw; and the trout was hurled far up the bank. From the spot at which the trout had so surprisingly vanished up shot the head of the otter. For one instant the otter's dark and furious eyes blazed into the pale eyes of the lynx, at a distance of not more than a dozen or eighteen inches. Then the lynx was gone up the bank at a bound, to pin down and finish off the victim.

Now there were plenty more trout in the pool to be caught, and three dead or dying fish floating there to be picked up. But this fact to the otter was of no account whatever. He had been robbed of his kill. His prize had been impudently snatched from his teeth. There was room in his soul for no emotion but the rage of the avenger. He scrambled out on to the root and glided noiselessly up the bank.

From the point of view of the lynx, on the

other hand, it was he who had all the grievance. The pool was his own private preemption, long held without a challenge. The otter was an insolent trespasser. As a rule, two wild beasts of different species, if so nearly matched that the event of a combat might be doubtful, will avoid each other discreetly. The plain uncertainty is apt to daunt them both. They do not understand each other's methods of fighting. And each has too much at stake. But here, in each case, was a question of the honour of the wilds. It was a great quarrel which neither would shirk. Having killed the writhing fish, the lynx turned sharp about, crouched with one paw on the prize and eyed the approaching otter warily.

At first the otter came on with a steady rush, as if disdaining all fence and all precaution. At a distance of half-a-dozen feet, however, he paused, as if that pale, menacing stare of his crouching adversary had disconcerted him. He met it fairly, however, and steadily, and it was plain that he was in no way daunted. A moment more and he began to creep slowly forward, very slowly, inch by inch.

To the lynx, with his more fiery but less tenacious temperament, this very deliberate and long-drawn-out approach was more trying than a savage rush would have been. His courage was sound, but his nerves were jumpy. He opened his jaws wide and hissed harshly, and followed this demonstration by a strident yowl. Neither of these appearing to impress the creeping foe, he felt it impossible to keep still any longer. With a sudden bounce he shot into the air, to come down, as he calculated square on the otter's back. But when he came down the otter's back was no longer where he had expected it to be. It had been discreetly removed. The next instant the otter's teeth snapped at his throat but missed hold by a hair's breadth. For some seconds the two gnashed snarling in each other's faces ; then, as if by common consent, they sprang apart, and began a slow, wary circling, each impressed with a sense of the other's prowess. That moment's clash of snarling jaw on jaw had seemed to let in a flash of understanding upon their hot hearts.

As they circled, each sparring for a chance to catch the other at a disadvantage, the dead trout lay gleaming and bleeding on the turf

between them. Presently the otter made a little rush in, as if to seize it. But at this the lynx pounced in also, with a startling growl. The otter shrank back a little. The lynx checked his spring. In another moment the two were once more circling and sparring for vantage as before.

The longer the otter studied that grey, prowling, shadowy shape, with the wide eyes, the powerful hunched hind-quarters, the long and ripping claws, the less certain he felt of his ability to handle it, the more surely did his fighting lust cool down. He began to think of his other prizes in the pool, to be gathered without an effort ; and but for his pride he would willingly have withdrawn from the doubtful venture which now involved him. But he was of dogged temper, and he showed no outward sign of his irresolution. The lynx, on the other hand, being less obstinate and of more variable mood, began to think of rabbits and such like easy enterprises. The more he studied that low, sinewy, dark figure with its keen teeth and punishing jaw, the less he liked it, and the more indifferent he grew to the attractions of trout as a diet. The radius of his menacing prowl grew

gradually wider. In response the otter discreetly drew back a few feet. The lynx paused, and glanced up into a tree, as if suddenly interested in the flittings of a black-and-white woodpecker. The otter sniffed inquiringly at the ground as if discovering a new scent there. The trout seemed to be forgotten. It lay glistening in a patch of sun ; and a large bluebottle alighted upon it.

Half a minute later the lynx strolled away, very deliberately. At the edge of a bush some thirty or forty paces distant he sat down on his tail, and looked around with elaborate carelessness to see what his rival was going to do. At the slightest provocation he was ready to return and fight the matter out. But the otter was no longer provocative. He swung about, glided back to the pool, slid into it, and snatched up one of the fish which he had already slain. Dragging it out upon the further bank, he fell to his meal with relish, in full view of his late antagonist. Thereupon the lynx came prowling back. He put his paw on the prize, and glared across the water with a defiant growl. There was no response, his rival being apparently too busy to heed him. He snatched up the fish in his

teeth, and growled again. Still no reply from the otter. Then, with his stub tail stiff in the air, and stepping haughtily, he marched off into the silent green shades to make his meal.

The Shadows and John Hatch

WHEN John Hatch found the lynx kittens in their shallow den on the bright and windy shoulder of Old Sugar Loaf, he stood for some minutes looking down upon them with a whimsical mixture of compassion and hostility. In his eyes all lynxes were vermin of the worst kind. They had killed three of his sheep. An old male had clawed his dog so severely that the dog had lost its nerve and all value as a hunting partner. They were great destroyers of the young deer, the grouse, and the hares, and so interfered with the supply of John Hatch's larder. In a word, they were his enemies, and therefore, according to his code, to be destroyed without compunction. But these were the first kittens of the hated breed that Hatch had ever seen. Unlike the full-grown lynx, whose fur is of a tawny, shadowy grey, these youngsters

had sleek, brilliant coats adorned with stripes like a tiger's. They were so young that their eyes were not yet open, and they lay huddled cosily and trustingly together, in their bed of brown leaves, like so many exaggerated kittens of the hearthside tabby. But this was no extenuation of their crime, in John Hatch's eyes. It pleaded for them not at all, for he had his established custom in dealing with superfluous kittens.

Presently he stooped down and stroked the huddle of shining fur. Blind babies though they were, the youngsters knew the touch for an alien one, the unknown smell for the smell of an enemy. Their tails and the ruffs of their necks bristled instantly, and, with a feeble spitting, they turned and clawed savagely at the intruding hand. The little claws drew blood, and John Hatch withdrew his hand with a laugh that had a touch of admiration in it.

"Gosh, but ye're spunky little devils!" he muttered. "But ye ain't agoin' to grow up to use them claws on my sheep nur my dawg, an' don't ye fergit it!" For a moment he thought of wringing their necks, as the simplest way of getting the matter off his hands.

But his kindly disposition shrank from the barbarity of the process; and, after all, to his mind they were kittens of a kind, and therefore entitled to a more gracious form of taking off. For all their spitting and clawing, he picked them up by the scruffs of their necks, stuffed two of them into his capacious pockets, carried the other two in his fist, and made his way hastily down the mountain, keeping a watchful eye over his shoulder, lest the mother-lynx should happen back from her hunting and attempt a rescue. He made his way to a little well-like pool, a sort of pocket of black water in a cleft of the granite, which he had passed and noted curiously on his upward climb. Into this icy oblivion he dropped the baby lynxes in a bunch, with a stone tied to them, as he was wont to do with the superfluous kittens at home. "Good riddance to that rubbish!" he muttered, as he strode on down the mountain.

But, underestimating the strength of these wild kittens, he had tied the string carelessly. In their drowning struggles, the string had come undone, and the victims, freed from the stone, had risen to the surface. But by this time they were too weak for any effectual

effort at escape, and in their blindness they could not find the shore. Two, by chance, drifted upon a lip of rock, where they sprawled half awash and were presently dead of the chill. The other two sank again into the black depths.

Their puny struggles had not long been stilled—five minutes, perhaps, or ten—when the mother-lynx arrived at the edge of the pool. Returning to her den and finding her little ones gone, the footprints and the trail of the woodsman had told her the story. Crouching flat, with ears back and teeth bared to the sockets, she had glared about her with terrible eyes, as if thinking that the ravisher might yet be within reach. Then, after one long, agonized sniff at the spot where her young had lain, she had sped away noiselessly down the steep, running with nose to the blatant trail and wild eyes peering ahead through the tangle of the brush.

At the edge of the pool she stopped. Though Hatch's trail went on, she saw at once, from his halt at the edge, that something had happened here. In a moment or two her piercing eyes detected those two

little limp bodies lying awash on the lip of granite at the other side of the pool.

Eagerly she called to them, with a harsh but poignant mew, and in two prodigious leaps she was leaning over them. With tender, mothering lips she lifted them from the water by their necks, curled herself about them for warmth, and fell to licking them passionately with soft murmurs of caress. She did not notice, apparently, the absence of the other two, or perhaps her sense of numbers was defective, and she could not count. However that may be, she devoted herself with concentrated fervour for some minutes to the two limp and bedraggled little forms, striving passionately to stir them back to life. Then, as if realizing on the sudden that they were dead, she almost spurned them from her, sprang to her feet with a long yowl, and ran around the pool till she again picked up John Hatch's trail.

It was about four in the afternoon when John Hatch crossed the last of the half-bare slopes, with their scant growth of poplar and sapling birch, which fringed the foot of Old Sugar Loaf, and plunged into the dark spruce woods which separated him from his lonely

farm on the banks of Burnt Brook. His trail was now an easy one, an old and moss-grown "tote-road" of the lumbermen. It was some ten or a dozen years since this region had been lumbered over, and by this time the young timber which had then been left, as below the legal diameter for cutting, had grown to the full and stately stature of the spruce. The great trees, however, had not yet had time to kill out the bushy undergrowth which had sprung up luxuriantly in the wake of the choppers, and consequently the forest on either side of the trail was a dense riot of jungle to the height of six or eight feet.

John Hatch knew that the mother-lynx, had he caught her at home, would have put up a valiant fight in defence of her babies. He thought that she might even have attacked him in the open if she had come up with him while he had the kittens on him. He despised all lynxes as cordially as he hated them; but he knew that a mother, of almost any breed, may do desperate things for her young. Having his axe with him, however, and the nicest of woodsman's skill in using it, he had had no misgivings at any moment, and, now

that the kittens were at the bottom of the pool, he dismissed the whole matter from his mind. There remained of it nothing at all but a dim satisfaction that four dangerous enemies to his sheep had been thus easily disposed of.

Suddenly, without knowing why, John Hatch stopped in his stride, gripped his axe instinctively, and glanced over his shoulder. The skin of his cheeks, beneath the grizzled stubble, crept curiously. He felt that he was being followed. But there was nothing on the trail behind him, which was clear and straight to his view for a good two hundred yards back. He peered deep into the undergrowth, first on one side, then on the other. No living thing was to be seen, except a little black-and-white woodpecker, which slipped behind a hemlock trunk and peered around at him with bright, inquiring eyes.

"Guess I've got the creeps," growled Hatch, with certain unprintable expletives, which seemed to indicate annoyance and surprise. Whirling angrily on his heel, he resumed his long, loose-kneed woodman's stride.

But he could not get rid of that sensation of being followed. For a long time he re-

solutely ignored it. There was nothing in the woods that he had need to fear. He knew there was no wild beast, not even the biggest bear between Old Sugar Loaf and the Miramichi, that would be so rash as to seek a quarrel with him. As for the mother-lynx, she had passed out of his mind, so ingrained and deep was his scorn of all such "varmin." But presently the insistence of that unseen presence on his trail became too strong for him, and, with a curse, he turned his head. There was nothing there. He bounded into the wood on the left of the track, parting the undergrowth furiously with both arms outstretched before his face. To his eyes, still full of the sunlight, the brown-green gloom was almost blackness, for the moment. But he seemed to see, or imagined he saw, a flitting shadow—whether darker or lighter than its surroundings he could not have told—fade into the obscurity around it.

Hatch swore softly and turned back into the homeward trail. "It's nawthin' but that lynx!" he muttered. "An' I'm a fool, an' no mistake!"

The mystery thus satisfactorily solved, he swung on contentedly for the next mile or so.

Then once more that uncanny impression of being trailed began to tingle in his cheeks and stir the roots of the hair on his neck. He laughed impatiently, and gave no further heed to it. But, in spite of himself, a peculiar picture began to burn itself into his consciousness. He realized a pair of round, pale, baleful eyes, piercing with pain and vengeful fury, fixed upon him as they floated along, close to the ground, in the midst of a gliding shape of shadow. Knowing well that the beast would never dare to spring upon him, he spat upon the ground in irritated contempt. At the same time he was nettled at its presumption in thus dogging his trail. He could see no object in it. The futile menace of it angered him keenly.

"I'll bring my gun along next time I'm over to Sugar Loaf," he murmured, "an' I'll put a ball through her guts if she don't keep off my trail!"

His vexation was not mollified by the fact that, when he came out from the spruce-woods into the open pastures of his clearing, and saw his farmyard below him basking in the sun, he felt a distinct sense of relief. This was an indignity that he could never have

dreamed of. That a lynx should be able to cause him a moment's apprehension! It was inconceivable. Yet—he was glad of the open. He resolved to get out all his traps and snares at once, and settle scores with the beast without delay.

That night, however, he dismissed the idea of traps from his mind as making too much of the matter. As he sat by his kitchen fire, smoking comfortably, his chores all done up, the battle-scarred dog asleep beside his chair, and forgiving tabby curled up on his knee, and the twang of night-hawks in a clear sky coming in through the open window with the fresh smell of the dew, he chuckled at his own folly.

"I sure *did* have the creeps," he explained to the cat, which opened one eye at him and shut it again noncomittally. "But I ain't agoin' to have 'em agin. No, sir-ee!"

But the scarred dog, a lean black-and-tan mongrel, with some collie strain revealed in his feathering and in his long, narrow jaw, stirred uneasily in his sleep and whimpered.

John Hatch had two cows and a yoke of red steers. At this kindly time of year they all stayed out at pasture, day and

night, with the sheep, in the upper burnt lot—a ragged field of hillocks and short, sweet grass, and fire-blackened stumps slowly rotting. Along the left of the field the dark spruce woods came down close to the zigzag snake fence of split rails which bounded Hatch's clearing. At this point were the pasture bars, which served the purpose of a gate ; and here, about sundown, the two cows stood lowing softly, waiting for Hatch to come with his tin milk-pails and ease their heavy udders of the day's burden.

On the evening following Hatch's trip up Old Sugar Loaf, he was a little later than usual at his milking, and the pasture was all afloat in violet dusk as he dropped the two upper bars at one end and swung his long legs over with a clatter of his two tin pails. He picked up his three-legged stool, hitched himself under the flank of the nearest cow, gripped a pail between his knees, and in a moment began the soft, frothy thunder of the two white streams pulsating down alternately into the tin under the rhythmic persuasion of his skilled fingers. The dog, who was not *persona grata* to the cows, because he had at times to rebuke them for trespassing

on the oat field or the turnip patch, sat up on his haunches at the other side of the fence and watched the milking indifferently.

The first cow was milked and had wandered off to feed, and Hatch was almost through with the second, when through the bars he saw the dog get up quickly and go trotting off homeward with an air of having been kicked. Mildly wondering, he muttered to himself: "Got more whims 'n a mare colt, that Jeff!"

A moment later the cow snorted and gave a jump which would have upset a less wary milker than John Hatch. She ran away down the field, tossing her horns, to join her companion and the steers. And Hatch was left sitting there with the pail between his legs, staring fixedly into the dark woods. For the fraction of a second he half fancied that a shadow flitted across them. Then he knew it was an illusion of his eyes, straining suddenly in that illusive light.

Very angry—too angry to find expression in even the most unparliamentary of speech—he rose to his feet, set the pail of milk beside its fellow, grabbed the sturdy milking-stool by one leg, vaulted the fence, and

plunged into the woods. It was not a particularly handy weapon, the stool, but John Hatch was not a particularly prudent man. If there *was* anything there in the woods, prying on his steps and frightening his "critters," he wanted to come to grips with it at once.

But there was nothing there, as far as he could see. Once more the fine hairs crept and tingled up and down the back of his neck. He stalked indignantly back to the fence, vaulted it, flung down the milking-stool, grabbed up the milk pails so roughly that the contents slopped over on to his homespun breeches, and set off for home. Not once did he allow himself to look back, though, to his impatient wrath, he felt sure all the way down the lane that malevolent eyes were watching him through the fence.

On the following day John Hatch spent most of the time in the woods with his gun, hunting the coverts for miles about the clearing. He hunted stealthily now, as noiseless and furtive as any of the wild kindred themselves. He saw nothing more formidable than a couple of indifferent skunks and a surly old porcupine which rattled its

quills at him. He wanted to shoot the skunks as " varmin," inimical to his chickens ; but he refrained, lest he should give the alarm to the unknown enemy whom he was hunting. He searched assiduously for anything like a hostile trail ; but there had been no rain lately, and the ground was hard, and the dead-brown spruce-needles formed a carpet which took little impression from wary paws, and he gained no clue whatever. He turned homeward, somewhat relieved, toward milking-time. But, before he reached the edge of the woods, once more came that warning and uncanny creep at the roots of his hair.

In a flash of fury he wheeled and fired into the thickets just behind him. He could have sworn that a grey shadow flitted away behind the grey trunks. But his most minute search could discover no trail save here and there a light disturbance of the spruce-needles. It was easy for him to infer, however, with his instinct and his wood-craft, that these disturbances were due to the great softly-padded paws of a lynx.

He bared his teeth in scorn, and on the following day he fairly sowed that section of the forest with snares and traps. Within

a week he had taken a weasel, three woodchucks, half a dozen skunks, and thirteen rabbits. Then, feeling that the game was carried on under a surveillance which he could neither locate nor evade, he suddenly quitted it, and fell back upon an attitude of contemptuous indifference. But he cleared away all the undergrowth in the woods within fifty yards of the pasture bars, because he would not have the cows scared at milking.

As long as Hatch kept out of the woods, or the very immediate neighbourhood of them, he was quite untroubled by the sense of the haunting shadow and the unseen, watching eyes. For a time now he did keep out of them, being fully occupied with his tasks in the little farm. Then came a day when he found that he wanted poles. The best poles, as he knew, grew on the shores of a little lake some miles away, near the foot of Sugar Loaf. But he thought he would make shift to do with the very inferior poles which grew along the edge of the wild meadow at the other side of the farm. At first he persuaded himself that his object in this was merely to save time. Then he realized that he was shrinking from the journey through the woods. Flushing

with shame, he consigned his folly and all lynxes to the place of eternal torment, hitched his old sorrel mare to the drag, and set out after those superior poles which grew below Sugar Loaf. But he took his gun along with him, which had not been hitherto by any means his invariable custom.

On the way out there occurred nothing unusual. The green summer woods seemed once more to John Hatch the old, friendly woods, with neither menace nor mystery to his rather unimaginative spirit. He whistled gaily over his chopping, while the old sorrel pastured comfortably in a patch of wild meadow by the lake, troubled by nothing but the flies, whose attention kept her long tail ceaselessly busy. Well along in the afternoon he started homeward with a light heart, as many trimmed poles on his drag as the sorrel could comfortably haul.

The journey was uneventful. After a time, indeed, Hatch felt himself once more so completely at home in his familiar wilderness that the tension of his nerves relaxed, and the exasperating experiences of the past weeks were forgotten. He reached a turn of the wood-road, where it crested a rise about half

a mile from his clearing, and saw his homely cabin, with its farmyard and its fields basking in the low afternoon sunshine, straight before him.

It was a comfortable picture, framed as in a narrow panel by the dark uprights of the spruce on either side of the mossy road. Hatch framed his lips to whistle in his satisfaction at the picture.

But the whistle wavered out in a thin breath, as he felt once more that hated creeping of the skin, that crawling at the back of his neck. He dropped the reins and snatched up his gun from where it lay on top of the load of poles. At the same moment the sedate old sorrel shied violently, almost knocking him over, and then started on a wild gallop down the road, spilling the poles in every direction as she went.

With a crisp oath, Hatch burst through the undergrowth which fringed the road. He fancied that he saw a grey shadow fading off among the grey trunks, and he fired at once.

Hatch was a good shot, and he felt sure that he had scored a hit. In keen exultation he ran forward, expecting to find his enemy stretched on the spruce-needles. But there

was nothing there. He turned on his heel in deep disgust, and caught sight of another shadowy shape flickering off in another direction. Up went his gun again to the shoulder. But he did not fire, for there was no longer anything to fire at. He lowered his gun and rubbed his chin thoughtfully, feeling even his old lumber-camp vocabulary inadequate.

Outwardly cold, but boiling within, Hatch stalked slowly homeward, ignoring the scattered poles along the way. He felt no more of the presence of the dogging shadows, presumably because they had withdrawn themselves at the sound of the gun-shot. Arrived at home, he found the old sorrel, with the empty drag, waiting at the gate to be let in, and Jeff, who always stayed at home to guard the house, wagging his tail interrogatively beside her, puzzled to know why she had come home without her master or her load.

John Hatch looked at the dog musingly.

"Jeff," said he, "if ye warn't so blankety blank *blank* afeerd o' lynxes, ye'd help me a sight in runnin' them varmin down. But ye ain't got no nerve left. Reckon I'll have to

take ye into the woods now an' agin, kind of fur discipline, an' help ye to git it back. Ye ain't much account now, Jeff."

And the dog, feeling the reproach in Hatch's quaint speech, dropped his tail and pretended he had business behind the barn.

After this, when Hatch's affairs took him into the woods, Jeff went with him. But he went unhappily, crowding at his master's heels, with head and ears and tail one unanimous protest. To Hatch these expeditions sometimes proved uneventful, for sometimes the hostile shadows seemed to be off somewhere else, and too occupied to follow Hatch's trail. On such occasions Hatch knew that the unseen surveillance was withdrawn, because he had none of those warning "creeps" at the nape of his neck. But to Jeff every covert or thicket within a radius of fifty yards was an ambush for lynxes, and only at his master's heels did he feel secure from their swift and eviscerating claws. When he saw John Hatch stop abruptly, glare about him, and plunge into the underbush, then Jeff would try to get between his legs, an effort not helpful to Hatch's marksmanship or to his temper. And the shadows—for there seemed to John

Hatch to be two of them haunting him now—would fade off elusively into the environing and soundless shade.

All through the summer and the autumn this mysterious trailing went on, till Hatch, disgusted by the futility of his attempts to shake it off, assumed indifference and pretended to himself that he rather liked being haunted. He remarked to Jeff—with whom he could allow himself to speak more frankly than to most—that an occasional creepy feeling about the roots of one's hair might be good for the scalp, a preventive of baldness even. But in the depths of his heart he grew more and more uneasy. Such vigilant and untiring vindictiveness on the part of creatures which are wont to shun all human neighbourhood with an incorrigible savagery of shyness was unnatural. It seemed to him to suggest a very madness of hate, an obsession which might culminate in some deed of desperation unheard of among lynxes.

When, however, the winter had once settled in with full rigour, Hatch found that he was being shadowed with less and less insistence. He inferred at once that this was because his foes were now forced to spend most of their

time in foraging for their own livelihood, and he drew a wry face of self-disgust as he realized the depth of his relief. As the winter advanced, and the cold bit fiercer, and the snow gathered as if to bury the wilderness world away from sight for ever, it came at last to seem as if the unknown purpose of the avengers was forgotten. No more, upon his tramps on snowshoes through the muffled woods, did John Hatch feel those admonitory creepings of his flesh, and presently he forgot all about the haunting shadows and their menace.

John Hatch's chief occupation, during the winter months, was the chopping and hauling of cordwood for the settlements. On a certain day he was enjoying himself greatly in the felling of a huge birch. The crisp, still air was like wine in his veins. The axe was keen, and under the bite of its rhythmic strokes the big white chips flew off keenly. Sitting on the wood-sled at a safe distance, Jeff watched the chopping with alert interest, while the old sorrel dreamed with drooping head and steamed in the dry frost. The tree, cut nearly through, was just beginning to lean, just tottering to its fall, when once

more John Hatch was conscious of that hated crawling in the skin of his cheeks, the lifting of the hairs on his neck. With a savage curse, he wheeled about, swinging up his axe. With a soft, swishing, crackling roar, down came the tree. It fell true, as he had chopped it, so he did not have to spring out of its path or even to glance at it. But, as it fell, it crashed heavily upon a dead branch in a neighbouring tree. The dead branch flew hurtling through the air and smote John Hatch violently on the back of the head. He dropped like a log and lay quite still in the chip-strewn snow.

There was a clatter of chains and harness, as the old sorrel, sniffing the enemy, started at a gallop for home. Jeff, seeing that his master was down, sprang to his side, whining, and fell to licking frantically at his unconscious face. Getting no response, he suddenly remembered the taint in the air, which was already making his back bristle. Bestriding Hatch's body, he turned his head with a savage snarl. He could not see the enemy, but he smelled them all too clearly. With ears laid flat to the skull, lips curled up from his long white teeth, and half-open eyes

flaming green, he glared at the spruce thicket whence that menacing scent came to his nostrils. With the responsibility for his master's care thus suddenly thrust upon him, his fear of lynxes vanished.

The noise of the old sorrel's flight died away down the white wood-road, and for several minutes nothing stirred. The lynxes had long practised patience, and, for all their hate, they were prudent. They could not make out at first why their enemy, who was always so vehemently active, should now be lying so still there in the snow. But wild animals are usually quick to realize it when an enemy or a quarry has been disabled. They presently concluded that here at last was the opportunity which they had been waiting for. For the dog they had nothing but scorn. They had mauled and beaten him once before. They had grown accustomed to his frank terror of them. Now he did not enter into their calculations.

One from each side of the spruce thicket, they crept stealthily forth, crouching low, their ears laid back, their round, pale eyes glaring boldly from their round, grey, cruel faces. Their big padded paws went lightly

over the snow. Very gradually they crept up, half expecting that John Hatch might spring to his feet any moment and rush at them with a roar. They had no great fear of his roars, however, having never known much hurt to come of them.

And all the time Jeff was tugging madly at John Hatch's arm, adjuring him to wake and meet the peril.

Apparently satisfied at length that there was no trap laid for them in John Hatch's quiescence, the two lynxes ran forward swiftly and sprang at his neck. To their surprise, they were met by Jeff's teeth. With that lightning side-snap which he had inherited from his collie ancestors, the dog managed to slash both his opponents severely in the space of half a second. In a blaze of fury they fell upon him, both at once. A yelling tangle of claws and teeth and legs and fur surged and bounced upon John Hatch's body.

John Hatch slowly came to. The pandemonium of snarls and screeches that filled his ears bewildered him. He thought he was having a nightmare. His legs were held down, it seemed, by battling mountains.

With a mighty effort he sat up. Then in a flash his wits came back to him. He saw Jeff with one lynx down, slashing at its throat, while the other clung upon his back and ripped him with its claws.

Bouncing to his feet, he clutched this latter combatant with both hands by the scruff of the neck, whirled it around his head and dashed it, yowling wildly, against a tree. Then he turned his attention to the other, which, though at a terrific disadvantage, was still raking Jeff murderously with its hinder claws.

Hatch grabbed up his axe. But he could find no chance to strike, lest he should injure the dog. At last, in desperation at seeing how Jeff was getting punished by those raking claws, he dropped the axe again and seized the beast by the hind legs. Dragging it out from under the astonished Jeff, he swung it several times about his head, and then launched it sprawling and screeching, high through the air. As it landed, he was upon it again, this time with the axe, and a straight short-arm blow ended the matter. The other lynx, which was recovering from its contact with the tree, saw that its mate was

slain, and sped off among the trees, just escaping the axe which Hatch hurled after it.

Jeff was lying down in the snow, licking his outrageous wounds, and content to leave the finishing of the affair in his master's hands.

"I was mistaken in yeh, Jeff," said John Hatch, "an' I apologize handsome. Ye're sure some dawg. I reckon there'll be no more shadders come sneakin' along *our* trail after this, an' thanks to you!"

Red Brush and Little Quills

"THE trouble with Bill," said the Shanty Kid in an injured voice, "is that he wants to make out he knows everything, just because he's the guide. Maybe he *does* know everything about the *grown-up* wild animals; I suppose he'd have to, being a guide! But when I ask him about what they do when they're just kiddies like me—then he makes up. I know by the way he looks."

"That's right!" responded Uncle Andy. "Don't you let Bill fool you *too* much! But as for these stories *I'm* going to tell you, remember every one of them might be true, and some of them *are*. There are people in the world besides Bill who know something about wild animals. As for me, *I've* always found 'em most amusing when they were kiddies, and one didn't have to kill them."

The waters of the lonely forest lake, which

they were coming to, were still as glass in the sunlight. On a log running out into the water sat a huge porcupine which, at sight of the two intruders on his solitude, began to bristle with indignation till every quill stood on end. Uncle Andy was interested in the ill-tempered stranger, but the Shanty Kid clutched him by the arm.

"Look out!" he protested anxiously. "Don't go any nearer to him! He'll shoot his quills right into you!"

"*Shoot* his quills, indeed!" said Uncle Andy sarcastically. "He can shoot his quills just about as far as you can shoot your hair. That's Bill again at his yarns. But if you go to *touch* him, then look out! He'll make a nice pincushion of you in about half a second."

"Oh!" said the Shanty Kid, much mortified at having been fooled by Bill. But as the old porcupine at that moment started to come ashore, squealing angrily, the Shanty Kid very politely stepped off the path to give him plenty of room. It was quite the proper thing to do, so Uncle Andy followed his example, and the old porcupine passed on, grumbling, up the trail.

" I don't like him ! " said the Shanty Kid. " He's too big, and he's got too many prickles ! Do you suppose he was like that when he was little ? "

" Well," replied Uncle Andy thoughtfully, seating himself on the end of the log and taking out his pipe, " I can give you quite an idea about that. Sit down here, and I'll tell you about one of his great-grandchildren, or great-great-grandchildren, who went out walking all by himself one day and fell in with a spry young fox."

" What was his name ? " inquired the Shanty Kid, much interested.

" Let's call him Little Quills," said Uncle Andy. " And as for the young fox, as far as I can remember, his name was Red Brush. Now, don't you interrupt me unless you simply have to.

" The babyhood of Little Quills, let me tell you, was quite unlike that of most other youngsters you've ever heard of, whether in the wild woods or in the world of men. His mother never treated him disrespectfully. She never thought of rubbing him the wrong way. He, in return, was most careful to take no liberties with his mother.

"He never rolled over her back, or clawed her ear, or jumped on her, or bit her tail, I can tell you that. He'd have been sorry if he had. Not that his mother would have resented it. Not at all! She was good-nature itself to him always. But you can't play much with a thistle—and a porcupine, in the best of humours, is something like a great, strong, terrible, crawling thistle.

"When Little Quills, with his brothers and sisters, lay in the nest, he was careful to keep his nose and throat, and the soft under-parts of his body, turned towards his mother's soft breast."

"Weren't there any quills on her breast?" interrupted the Shanty Kid.

"Of *course* not!" answered Uncle Andy, a little impatiently, as if the Shanty Kid ought to know *that*. "And, as I was just going to say, he was very careful not to crowd or shove. In fact, the porcupine family just *had* to be polite to each other. There was no rudeness they could safely indulge in, except to nip each other's toes and squeal when they felt ill-tempered.

"With such a prickly family on her hands, it was most natural that the mother porcu-

pine should make them care for themselves when quite young. This was not difficult, as their great, sharp teeth, like chisels, grew very quickly, and they soon found out what fun it was to gnaw things, especially things that tasted good.

"Everything, almost, in the way of green twigs, and bark, and wood—even the bitter bark of spruce and hemlock—tasted good to them. So their breakfasts were always right on hand, always ready; and while they were still little more than babies their mother led them far away from their den, in among the sweet-smelling shadows and patchy sunlight of the forest, and suddenly slipped away by herself without so much as a 'good-bye, my dears!'

"The rest of the youngsters at once climbed into trees, where instinct told them they could have food, lodging, and safety all together. But Little Quills, being of a more independent disposition, and not happening to like any tree that was handy, started right off by himself to see the strange, whispering, shadowy world.

"He was a squat, sturdy, little figure, with a blunt, chopped-off looking nose, and a

queer hood of mingled fur and quills coming down above his eyes like tremendous eyebrows. At this age he was very dark in colour, for the black and white quills had not yet grown out beyond the tips of his long, soft, dark brown fur. His tail was short, but quite ridiculously thick and strong, and covered with keen quills like the rest of his body.

"As Little Quills travelled through the underbrush and weeds, he took no pains to go softly and keep hidden, like all the other forest children travel, but just crackled and pushed his way along as if he owned the earth. The ground being rough and his legs short, he progressed very slowly, however, till at last he blundered out upon a lumber-man's trail. This he followed joyously. It was smooth, and as he had no particular place to go to, one direction suited him as well as another.

"Right along the middle of the trail he crawled, never caring what savage eyes might be watching him from the green thickets on either side. Once, indeed, as he passed under a jutting stump, and suddenly caught sight of a big lynx crouching and glaring

down upon him, he paused, and his needle points stood up all over him, till he looked three times his natural size. But that lynx knew too much to meddle with a porcupine, even if it was only a baby porcupine. So Little Quills passed on unharmed, and his angry bristles presently subsided.

"At last he came out from the gloomy trail into the sunshine of a wide clearing which surrounded an old, deserted lumber-camp. Little Quills was dazzled at first by the glare, and shrank back; but curiosity soon led him forward again. He had caught sight of a queer, light-coloured thing lying beside the trail. It was an empty wooden box, which had once contained salt codfish. Little Quills went up to it bravely, took one sniff at it, and decided it was good to eat.

"Never before had Little Quills tasted anything quite so good as this dry wood saturated with fishy salt. It felt so good, too, to his strong teeth. Everything else in the world was forgotten. He gnawed, and gnawed, and gnawed, as hard as he could, as if he were afraid the box might get away from him.

"And because the box was dry and hollow,

his gnawing made a great noise on the sleepy summer air. And the noise attracted the attention of a graceful, bright-eyed, red-furred creature, with a long, bushy, red tail, who was very busy pouncing upon grasshoppers away over at the other side of the clearing."

"That's Red Brush!" exclaimed the Shanty Kid.

"Of course!" said Uncle Andy. "Who else could it be? Well, Red Brush didn't know what to make of that queer noise. His clever eyes opened very wide, then narrowed cunningly, his pointed ears stood up straight, and his slim black snout wrinkled inquiringly as he listened to the unknown sound. It was something he just *had* to find out about. Stealthy as a shadow he set out across the clearing, seeking the shelter of every bush, and flashing across the open spots like a red streak. It was not *his* way to let all the world know what he was up to.

"At last, peering forth from behind a cluster of milk-weed, he caught sight of Little Quills gnawing at the fish-box. Now, Red Brush had never seen a porcupine before. To his eyes Little Quills was a harmless-

looking creature, considerably smaller than himself, and very probably better to eat than grasshoppers.

"His first impulse was to sneak up and grab him at once. But, no! There was something strangely confident in the stranger's attitude that made him hesitate. He stole nearer and nearer, till he was quite near enough to jump. But instead of jumping, he sat up on his haunches just behind Little Quills, and tried to make up his mind.

"As Little Quills kept happily gnawing at the fish-box, he kept turning his head this way and that, till all of a sudden, out of the corner of his eye, he caught a glimpse of Red Brush sitting there close behind him. At once all his quills began to rise, though he was far too busy to stop gnawing. But as for Red Brush, he was terribly surprised. The little, dark-brown creature had suddenly grown as big as himself, and turned to a greyish colour as the black and white quills revealed themselves through the fur.

"Red Brush saw that he had been near making a great mistake. Perhaps the stranger was *not* good to eat. He stole closer, circling cautiously, and just bursting with curi-

osity. Little Quills kept right on gnawing, but his shrewd eyes following every movement of the dangerous-looking intruder.

"At last, however, he concluded it was time to be careful; for Red Brush, with long, cruel teeth bare and gleaming, was getting very close. Backing suddenly away from the box, he crouched with his nose between his fore-paws, and bristled himself till every quill stood up straight and threatening.

"Red Brush was still more astonished; but his confidence returned as the strange creature showed no sign of fight. Tip-toeing daintily all about the bristling bunch of quills, which seemed to have no convenient place to bite at, he caught sight of that absurd bunch of a tail, sticking out so stiffly all by itself. Perhaps that would do to grab. He would find out.

"Stretching out his nose to sniff at it, he found out all at once more than he wanted to. Quick as lightning that stiff tail struck sideways very savagely. It caught Red Brush a heavy blow right on the side of the nose. And instantly his muzzle was so full of quills, it looked as if he had grown a lot of black and white whiskers.

"With a shrill yelp of pain and astonishment, Red Brush threw himself clean over backwards, and fell to pawing wildly at those fiery torments in his nose. Failing to get rid of them, he raced desperately across the clearing as if a swarm of hornets were after him, and disappeared in the woods.

"In a minute or two, Little Quills lifted his head, smoothed down his bristles, and went on gnawing at the fish-box. When he had eaten quite all he could hold—and that was a lot, let me tell you—he climbed the nearest tree, crawled out on a branch, hung himself up in a comfortable crotch, and let himself be rocked to sleep."

"But what became of Red Brush?" asked the Shanty Kid anxiously.

"Oh, now, let me tell you," replied Uncle Andy, relighting his pipe. "*If* that young fox had been as big a fool as some people think he was, with nothing in his head but instinct to help him out of the scrapes he was all the time getting into, he'd have died miserably with that swarm of quills in his snout. But he had sense, that young fox. He could do some thinking, in his fox fashion.

"When he got away by himself, he put his

nose down close to the ground, and planted his fore-paws solidly on the quills, and tried to pull them out. But the ground was so soft and loose he couldn't get any hold that way. So he hunted about for a hard piece of ground—or a big, flat rock, most likely—where he could get a good hold. *Then* he managed to tear out most of the quills, though you may think for yourself how it hurt! The rest he managed to break off short.

"Then he went away and hid in a dark place by the brook for days, and didn't eat a thing—only drank a lot of water. His nose swelled up, and burnt, and ached, till he would have to run, whimpering, and stick it into the cool, wet mud. After a while, the ends of the quills worked their way through into his mouth, and dropped out; and the swelling went down, and he got perfectly well.

"And ever after that he was a very wise fox, and always looked politely the other way when he saw a porcupine."

The Bumptiousness of Billy Gitchemoos

DID you ever see a moose-fight, Uncle Andy?" asked the Shanty Kid, who had been watching eagerly a fierce set-to between two small black ants and a big brown one.

"Well," said Uncle Andy diplomatically, as he knocked out his pipe on the log, "they are certainly great scrappers, those big bull moose. But the fellow that *thinks* he can fight is a moose calf. There was a little chap down on the Diggity-gwash one summer that thought he was as big as an elephant, and didn't hesitate to say so."

"What was his name?" inquired the Shanty Kid.

"As far as I can remember," answered Uncle Andy, trying to think, "it was Billy Gitchemoos. You see, Gitchemoos means

just 'Big Moose,' and this little bull felt much bigger than he was ever going to be. His mother, the biggest, and blackest, and fiercest moose-cow on the Diggity-gwash, thought him the most beautiful thing in the world, and never butted him around to teach him his place, like the other moose-cows used to do to *their* youngsters."

"Was he *really* so beautiful?" demanded the Shanty Kid.

"Humph!" grunted Uncle Andy. "What would you think? His *colour* was nice enough, to be sure, being a rich, dark brown. But he had a big, awkward head, with an absurdly long, overhanging upper lip, big, awkward ears, set too low on the head, and legs which were ridiculously long and awkward, tipped with huge, spreading hooves. Then his shoulders were so big they made a lofty hump, while his hind quarters were so little and thin that they looked actually mean.

"And his tail—why, the poorest mule on earth would have been ashamed to wear it. It was only big enough to wiggle.

"But, if Billy Gitchemoos was bumptious, there was, after all, some excuse for it out-

side of his mother's spoiling. So many things had happened to make him feel big. For instance, one day, when his mother was in the water pulling up and eating water-lily roots, he decided to wade in, near by, and try pulling some for himself.

"When he had gone in up to the knees, he stopped, rather startled. There, right in front of him, on the end of a drowned stump, sat a huge frog, staring at him with strange, bright eyes. He shook his head and snorted. Whereupon the frog, terribly frightened, turned a somersault over the log and disappeared with a great splash. No wonder Billy felt proud of himself, for that frog's eyes were very fierce.

"Another time, when he had wandered a little away from his mother, he came face to face with a big, brown rabbit, behind a bush. The rabbit sat right up on its hind quarters, stuck its long ears forward, and looked at him severely. He had never seen a rabbit before, but he shook his head bravely at the intruder, and snorted as loud as he could; and the rabbit ran away at once, its white tail bobbing frantically.

"It was the same way, as he soon came

to realize, with the partridges, the squirrels, and even the fat, surly woodchucks. Sometimes the woodchucks were saucy enough to face him when he snorted at them; but when he lowered his big head and ran at them, they got out of his way, then, I can tell you."

"I guess they had to!" agreed the Shanty Kid, shaking his own head sympathetically.

"But his greatest triumph," continued Uncle Andy, "was one day when another moose-cow, with her calf, came loafing over on Billy Gitchemoos' range. Billy's mother was down pulling lily-roots, as usual—for it took a powerful lot of lilies to satisfy her—but Billy, understanding that a real rival had at last appeared, charged the little stranger at once.

"The stranger, who was smaller and younger than he, was bowled over immediately, and fled, with a bleat of dismay, to his mother's side. The strange cow eyed Billy savagely for a moment, but Billy stood his ground, shaking his head. Then she, too, turned and ran away, with her calf at her heels. It was a great victory for Billy—who felt that it would have been all the same even

if his mother, just at the critical moment, had *not* come pounding up the bank, as black and terrible as a thundercloud!

"So you see that it was no wonder that Billy Gitchemoos felt big! But one day, just before autumn, he came bump up against an Experience."

"Huh!" said the Shanty Kid. "What was that? I don't know what that is!"

"Well," said Uncle Andy, "in this case it was a young bear, a cub whose mother had been shot a few days earlier, and who was very busy trying to learn how to look out for himself. Billy had wandered off by himself, up among the broken, bushy ravines of the ridge that shut in the river valley, and all at once he came upon the cub. He stopped short, his big feet stuck out in front of him.

"The cub said 'woof,' and sat up, just like the rabbit had done—but he looked much more formidable than the rabbit, I can tell you, with his black fur, and brown snout, and fierce, twinkling little eyes, and sharp ears cocked knowingly. Also, he was as big as a number of rabbits put together! But Billy didn't care for that. He snorted, shook

his head, and charged. And, just as he expected, the cub scurried away, being nervous since he lost his mother, and not looking for trouble to any great extent.

"But there was no tree handy for him to run to; and in a race his short legs were no match for Billy's long ones. In about five seconds Billy was on him, catching him square like a battering-ram; and with a squall of astonishment, the cub went flying head over heels into a juniper bush, whose prickles scratched his nose.

"Now, this was all that the cub—who was game right through, let me tell you—needed to make him change his mind about running away. As he picked himself out of the juniper bush he was the maddest little bear you ever saw. He whirled round like a flash, crouched back upon his haunches, and waited with one sturdy paw uplifted, ready for business, just as all his ancestors before him were.

"'Oh, this is easy!' thought Billy Gitchemoos, as he pranced back a little way, and charged again. But this time, somehow, he didn't seem to hit the cub in the same place as he hit him before. The place he

struck seemed to be all claws, and fearfully hard, too.

"The cub had dodged, and caught Billy a good one, right across the face. With a loud 'Ma-ah!' he toppled over to one side, and fell into the juniper bush.

"But Billy, too, was game all right, you know. He rolled right on through the juniper bush, lit on his big feet as cleverly as a cat, and pounded around the bush to try again. He thought there must have been some mistake. But when he saw the cub, sitting there as cool as you please, with one paw uplifted, he wasn't quite sure where the mistake was. His face was bleeding, and his head sang like a bee's nest. He shook his head till it sang still harder, blinked very fast, blew through his nose, and charged again.

"And this time, curiously enough, he didn't hit *anything*. But, as he went by, something hit *him* on the neck, so hard that it nearly knocked him over. He plunged forward and fell on his nose. He was up again in a second, and whisked around to see what had happened. He was very much upset in his mind, I can tell you, to see the cub still sitting there, cool as you please.

"'I don't like him!' he thought to himself. 'Maybe, I'd better not bother him any more!' But he felt too big to acknowledge himself beaten by that fat, little black chap, whose eyes were now twinkling in a most insulting manner. A dim sort of memory came to him, from the experience of all his ancestors, and he thought he'd try fighting with his feet instead of his head. They were big enough, and the edges of the hooves were as sharp as knives.

"This time he ran at the cub capering like a foolish calf, and snorting in a way that would have scared the bravest of rabbits half to death. Such queer actions made the cub madder than ever, because he didn't know just what he'd better do about it. But he had to decide mighty quick. When Billy got near enough, he struck out at the cub's head with those big, clacking hooves of his, quick as forked lightning.

"Now, I tell you what; if it hadn't been for that cub's father and mother, and grandfathers and grandmothers, and great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers, all having been boxers in their way, and terribly smart with their fore-paws, the story might have

ended differently, and Billy Gitchemoos might have gone on being bumptious all his life, and maybe have got into trouble some day trying to butt a locomotive off the track.

"But no! The cub parried Billy's stroke as cleverly as you please, and so hard that Billy was swung right off his feet, and landed on his back in the juniper bush. Before he could pull down his long legs and turn over, the cub was right on top of him, biting and clawing, mad clean through. But Billy was strong, and felt sure that the juniper bush was no place for him.

"He managed to shake the cub off, and scramble to his feet. Before he had time to think what to do next, he found himself scurrying down the hill, with the cub clawing at his hind quarters, but a lucky kick put a stop to *that*, of course. Billy thought he knew now just where that mistake was, and kept right on down the hill, bawling, 'Ma-*ah!* Ma-*ah!*' as hard as he could."

"And did the 'Ma-ah' come?" asked the Shanty Kid, anxious for the fate of the cub.

"*Of* course," replied Uncle Andy. "But that cub had sense. When Ma-ah came, he wasn't there at all. And Billy would have

had trouble explaining; only his mother saw at once it must have been a *big* bear that could get Billy so mauled up. For the next few days she went round looking for a bear as big as a barn door; and Billy never had to go into particulars."

Dagger-Bill and the Water-Babies

"WHAT'S that?" demanded the Shanty Kid nervously, as a peal of wild, crazy laughter rang out over the surface of the lake.

"Why, don't you know what *that* is yet?" said Uncle Andy with a superior air. "That's old Dagger-bill, the big black-and-white loon. Sounds as if he was terribly amused, doesn't he? But he's only calling to his big black-and-white mate, or the two little Dagger-bills they hatched out in the spring."

"What does *he* do?" asked the Shanty Kid.

"I don't *know* much about that fellow," answered Uncle Andy. "Now you see him, and now you don't. Mostly you don't; and when you do, as likely as not it's only his snaky black head, with its sharp dagger of a bill, stuck up out of the water to keep track

of you. He's *most* unsociable. If any one tells you he knows all about a loon, you wink to yourself and pretend you are not listening. But I'll tell you who *do* know something about old Dagger-bill—the Water-Babies."

"Who're the Water-Babies?" demanded the Shanty Kid.

"Why, don't you know *that?* The little musk-rats, of course, that live in the warm, dry, dark nest under the dome of their mud house, out in the water—the house with its doors so far under water that no one can get into it without diving and swimming."

"It must be cozy and awfully safe," said the Shanty Kid, who began to want a place like that himself.

"Yes, *fine!*" agreed Uncle Andy. "And safe from everything but the mink; and if *he* came in by one door, there was always another door open for them to get out by, so quick that the mink could never see their tails.

"Old Dagger-bill, of course, could never get into the house of the Water-Babies, for all his wonderful swimming and diving, because he was so big—as big as a goose. But, as a rule, he wouldn't want to bother the

Water-Babies. Fish were much more to Dagger-bill's taste than young musk-rat; and he could swim so fast under water that few fish ever escaped him, once he got after them.

"This summer, however, things were different at Long Pond. Hitherto it had fairly swarmed with fish—lake trout, suckers, chub, red-fins, and so on. But that spring some scoundrel had dynamited the waters for the sake of the big lake trout. Few fish had survived the outrage. And even so clever a fisherman as Dagger-bill would have gone hungry most of the time had he not been clever enough to vary his bill of fare.

"'If we can't have all the bread we want,' he said to the family, 'we must try to get along on cake!'"

"Dagger-bill *might* get *bread* from some *camp*," interrupted the Shanty Kid thoughtfully, being a matter-of-fact child. "But *what* could he know about *cake*, Uncle Andy?"

"Oh, come on! *You* know what I mean!" protested Uncle Andy, aggrieved at the Shanty Kid's lack of a sense of humour.

"You're too particular, you are! *You* know bread meant fish with Dagger-bill—and cake meant things like winkles and frogs, and water-mice, and—Water-Babies, of course!

"Well, you know, it was no joke hunting the Water-Babies, for the old musk-rats could fight, and would, and did! And after Dagger-bill and his family had breakfasted on two or three Water-Babies, there was great excitement in all the musk-rat homes.

"Dagger-bill was a new enemy, and they were not quite sure how to manage him. The mink they knew, the fox they knew, and the noiseless, terrible eagle-owl, and the swooping-hawk. All these they had their tricks for evading. And the savage pike they would sometimes fight in his own element.

"But Dagger-bill, swimming under water like a fish, and spearing them from beneath with the deadly javelin of his beak, this was a new and dreadfully upsetting danger. Furry heads got close together, and there was a terrible lot of squeaking and squealing before any one could make up his mind what to do. And meanwhile Dagger-bill was feel-

ing quite pleased, because he had found out that Water-Babies were good—and safe !—to eat.

" Now the Water-Babies, I must tell you, had two nests—one in the water-house, a few yards out from shore, and one at the end of the burrow leading up into the dry bank. Their favourite amusement, as a rule, was playing tag in the quiet water around the house, sometimes on the surface, sometimes beneath it. They would catch and nip each other by the tails or the hind legs, and sometimes grapple and drag each other down, for all the world like a lot of boys in swimming —but, how they could swim ! You'd give your eye teeth to swim like they could."

" Bet your boots, Uncle Andy," agreed the Shanty Kid, enthusiastically. " Specially, *these* teeth, 'cause they're my first, and I'll lose 'em soon, anyway ! "

" Huh ! " grunted Uncle Andy, looking at him suspiciously. " But, as I was saying, the Water-Babies, *could swim.* They were no match for Dagger-bill, however, who was quicker than a fish. And when Dagger-bill took to hunting Water-Babies, it was no longer safe for them to play far from home.

They would get themselves well nipped by their relations, I can tell you, whenever they went outside the little patch of shallow water between the house and the bank.

"Now the sharpness of Dagger-bill's eyes was something terrible. From away across the lake, where no musk-rat could see him at all, *he* could see the ripple made by the brown nose of the littlest musk-rat swimming. So one day, when the Water-Babies were playing tag in what was really, you know, nothing more nor less than their own back yard, he saw the swift ripples and splashes crossing and recrossing—and he laughed! *You* know how he laughed.

"And when the musk-rats heard that wild laughter, they bobbed up their furry heads, those in the water; and those on land sat up like squirrels to listen, and all were as delighted as possible because the sound was so very far away! Then the Water-Babies all began to play about as boldly as you please, because they knew Dagger-bill was away over at the other side of the lake."

"But do you suppose he really was?"

"Not much! The moment he was done

laughing he dived, and swam as hard as he could straight across the lake, under water. He swam and he swam, a sharp, black-and-white wedge rushing through the golden deep, as long as he could hold his breath. When he could not hold it a moment longer he came up, stuck his bill just above water, took a long breath, and dived again. He was halfway across the lake when he came up that time. Next time he was *all* the way across; but being very cunning indeed, he came up under a grassy bank, where his black bill was hidden among the stems.

"He was not more than twenty paces now from the place where the Water-Babies were splashing and racing and squeaking, and having such a good time on the smooth, sunny water, under the blue, blue sky. They were very happy. Dagger-bill sank back into the deep water so noiselessly, you would have said it was a shadow sinking. Then he rushed forward like a sword-fish, down there in the brown glow, and darted up right into the game of tag.

"He had aimed his cruel thrust at the Water-Baby who, at that particular moment, was IT. But, in that same second, as luck

would have it, IT caught the one he was pursuing, nipped his tail, and doubled back like lightning to escape getting nipped in return. So, you see, Dagger-bill missed his aim. That javelin of his beak just grazed the brown tip of IT's nose, scaring him to death, but nothing more."

"Ah-h!" breathed the Shanty Kid, relieved in his feelings.

"In a wink, of course," went on Uncle Andy, "all the Water-Babies, with a wild slapping of tails on the water to warn each other, were scurrying desperately for the nest. Some dived as deep as possible; but others lost their wits and swam on the surface. A moment more, and Dagger-bill, who had sunk at once, darted up again, and this time his terrible beak pierced right through a little swimmer's body, severing the backbone."

"Oh-h-h!" murmured the Shanty Kid, drawing in his breath sharply.

"I can't help it," said Uncle Andy. "But that's the way things go. Well, now, Dagger-bill rose right out on top of the water, as a bird should, and swam towards shore with the victim hanging limply from his beak. But every old musk-rat, along the bank or around

the water-house, had seen and had understood. Those folks that think musk-rats and other wild creatures have sense, would have said it was all planned out ahead—it happened so quick. Every musk-rat dived like a flash into the water and disappeared.

"Dagger-bill was coolly making for shore, not dreaming that anybody would dare interfere with *him*, when suddenly his black head went up in the air, his great beak opened with a hoarse squawk, and he dropped the dead Water-Baby. His dark wings flopped, and his tail was drawn under so violently that he nearly turned over backwards. It seemed to him that nothing less than the Great Sturgeon, which lived far down the river, must have grabbed him by the feet."

"Wish it had been!" said the Shanty Kid.

"Just you wait!" said Uncle Andy. "Well, the next minute he looked down, and, lo! and behold, all the water underneath him was alive with swimming musk-rats, darting up, and closing in upon him. Three or four already had their sharp teeth in his feet. He was mad and frightened, I can tell you.

"He struggled and flopped, but his short, wings could not raise him from the water

with those weights fastened upon his feet. Then his black head shot under, and he jabbed savagely this way and that, making dreadful wounds in those soft, furry bodies. But the musk-rats never heeded a wound. They swarmed upon their enemy with a splendid, reckless rage. *They'd* teach him to stab Water-Babies!

"And they did, too! In a minute or so they had pulled the old robber clean under, where they could all get at him; and, my! you should have seen how the water boiled! But it was only for a minute or two. Then two musk-rats came up, bleeding, but proud as you please, and then two or three more; and they all went ashore to lick their wounds and make their toilets, for, as you may imagine, their hair was somewhat disarranged.

"And then, while they were combing their fur with the claws of their little fore-paws like hands, who should come up but Dagger-bill; but his feet came up first, and he didn't come up far, anyway, and he didn't stir. In fact, he was good and dead—so dead that presently a young chub, and a red-fin, and two sunfish, came up and swam round him curiously.

"You see, they thought they might never have another chance to get such a *good, comfortable* look at a loon, and be able to talk about it afterwards."

The Daring of Stripes Terror-Tail

"WHAT would you do if a bear came at you, Uncle Andy?" inquired the Shanty Kid.

"Run!" said Uncle Andy promptly, "unless I had a gun!"

The Shanty Kid thought deeply for a moment.

"And what would you do if a little, teeny, black-and-white striped skunk came at you?" he asked.

"Run like sixty!" responded Uncle Andy, still more promptly.

"But a skunk's so little!" persisted the Shanty Kid. "Will he bite?"

"Bite!" retorted Uncle Andy scornfully. "He doesn't have to. It appears to me you don't know skunks very well!"

"Huh!" said the Shanty Kid. "I've smelt 'em. But *smells* can't hurt anybody."

"With your notions of skunks," answered Uncle Andy, "you're going to get yourself into a heap of trouble one of these days. I'd better tell you about what happened once when a small, young skunk, out walking all by himself in the dewy twilight, happened to meet a large, young bear."

Now, the Shanty Kid had a great respect for bears.

"Huh!" said he scornfully. "What could *he* do to a bear?"

"The little skunk's name," said Uncle Andy, paying no heed to the interruption, "was Stripes Terror-Tail. He was a pretty fellow, black and glossy, with two clear white stripes down his back on each side of his backbone. His tail was long and bushy, and carried high in a graceful curve; and he was about the size of a half-grown kitten.

"Generally, he went hunting with the rest of his family, for the Terror-Tails are affectionate, and fond of each other's companionship. But each one does just as he likes, in his easy way; so on this particular evening little Stripes had strolled off by himself over the dewy hillocks, catching fat crickets in the dim twilight, and hoping every minute

that he might find a ground-sparrow's nest under some bush."

"Did he rob birds' nests?" asked the Shanty Kid, remembering that this, for boys was one of the deadly sins.

"He certainly did!" said Uncle Andy, who didn't like to be interrupted. "That is, when he had a chance. Well, as luck would have it, a young bear was out nosing around the hillocks that evening, amusing himself with the fat crickets. He wasn't very hungry, being chock full of the first blue-berries.

"He would sit back on his haunches, like a tremendous, overgrown, black puppy, with his head tilted to one side, his ears cocked shrewdly, and a twinkle in his little dark eyes; and with one furry forepaw he would pat a thick bunch of grass till the frightened crickets came scurrying out to see what was the matter. Then he would almost fall over himself trying to scoop them all up at once —and while he was chewing those he'd caught, he'd look as disappointed as anything over those that got away.

"Well, when he got tired of crickets, he thought he'd look for a bird's nest. He came to a wide, flat, spreading juniper

bush, just the kind that might have a bird's nest under it; and as he nosed around it, he came face to face with little Stripes. You see, they were both after the same thing, and both had the same idea about the best place to look for it.

"Now, that young bear's education had been terribly neglected. He didn't know any more about skunks than you do. So he thought, maybe, the soft little black-and-white thing with the fluffy tail carried so airily might be just as good to eat as birds' eggs—besides being more filling, of course.

"He would have grabbed little Stripes right off, had the latter tried to run away. But as Stripes showed no sign of any such intention, the bear hesitated. After all, there didn't seem to be any great hurry! He put out a big paw to slap the stranger, but changed his mind and drew it back again, the stranger seemed so unconcerned. It was decidedly queer, he thought to himself, that a little scrap of a creature like that should be taking things so easy when he was around. He began to feel insulted.

"As for Stripes, nothing was farther from his mind than running away from the big,

black creature that had suddenly appeared in front of him. It was not for a plump leisurely little skunk to be taking violent exercise on a hot night. Yet he didn't want to walk right over the bear—not at all. And he had no intention of making things disagreeable for the clumsy-looking stranger."

"Huh, what could *he* do to *him?*" interrupted the Shanty Kid again. He had the greatest faith in bears.

"*Will* you wait!" groaned Uncle Andy. "But first let me explain to you the peculiar weapon with which Stripes, and all the Terror-Tail family, do their fighting when they have to fight—which they are quite too polite to do unnecessarily. Some distance below his bushy, graceful tail, sunken between the strong muscles of his thighs, Stripes had a shallow pit, or sac, of extraordinarily tough skin containing a curious gland, which secreted an oil of terrible power.

"The strong muscles surrounding this sac kept the mouth of it always so tightly closed that not an atom could get out to soil the little owner's clean, dainty fur, or cause the slightest smell. In fact, Stripes was altogether one of the cleanest and daintiest and

most gentlemanly of all the wild creatures. But when he *had* to, he could contract those muscles around the oil sac with such violence that the deadly oil—blinding and suffocating—would be shot forth to a distance of several feet, right into the face of the enemy. And *that*, let me tell you, was never good for the enemy!"

"Why?" demanded the Shanty Kid.

But Uncle Andy only eyed him scornfully.

"When Stripes, quite civilly, looked at the bear, and then proceeded to smell around under the juniper bush for that bird's nest, which didn't seem to be there, the bear was much puzzled. He put out his paw again—and again drew it back.

"Then he said 'Wah!' quite loud and sharp, to see if that would frighten the imperturbable stranger. But Stripes didn't seem to mind noises like that. His bright, intelligent eyes were on the bear all the time, you know, though he seemed to be so busy hunting for that bird's nest.

"'Pooh!' said the bear to himself, 'he's just plain idiot, that's what's the matter with him. I'll eat him, anyway!' and he bounced forward, with paw uplifted, intending to

gather Stripes as he would a fat cricket."

Here Uncle Andy was so inconsiderate as to pause and relight his pipe. The Shanty Kid clutched his arm.

"Well," he went on presently, "just at this moment Stripes made as if he was going to run away, after all. He whisked round, and jumped about two feet, and his fine tail flew up over his back, and in that very instant the bear thought the whole side of the hill had struck him in the face.

"He stopped with a bump, his nose went straight up in the air, and he squalled: 'Wah-ah! Wah——' But in the middle of these remarks he choked and strangled, and started pawing wildly at his nose, trying to get his breath.

"His eyes were shut tight, and that deadly oil clung like glue. His paws couldn't begin to get it off, and so he fell to rooting his nose in the turf like a pig, and ploughing the grass with his whole face, fairly standing on his head in his efforts, all the time coughing and gurgling as if he was having a fit.

"His behaviour, in fact, was perfectly ridiculous; but there was no one there to laugh at it but Stripes, and he was too polite.

He just strolled on quietly to another bush, and kept looking for that bird's nest.

"At last the bear, what with pawing and rooting, managed to get his breath and open his eyes. He wallowed a bit more, and then sat up, his nose full of dirt, and moss and grass hanging all over his face. He was a sight, I tell you! And how he did dislike himself!

"As he sat there, thinking how he'd ever get away from himself, he caught sight of Stripes, strolling off quietly over the brown hillocks. Sitting back on his haunches, he blinked at the little, leisurely black-and-white figure.

"'And to think I was going to eat *that!*' he said to himself sadly."

The Little Sly One

FROM away up near the top of the rocky hill that rose abruptly across the inlet came a terrible screech, piercing and startling.

"Gee!" said the Shanty Kid, slipping closer to Uncle Andy, where they sat together on a log by the water. "I'm glad that's away over there! What is it, Uncle Andy?"

"Lynx!" replied Uncle Andy, puffing at his pipe.

"What did he go and do *that* for?"

"Well," said Uncle Andy presently, "if you'll try your level best to listen without interrupting, I'll tell you."

"I'm *not* interrupting!" protested the Shanty Kid.

"Of course not!" agreed Uncle Andy. "Well, you see, the lynx is the slyest thing that goes on four legs. You think, maybe, a fox is sly. That fool guide Bill's told you

that. Now, a fox is sly when he chooses to be, and when he wants to be impudent he'd sauce King Solomon to his face. But a lynx is just born sly, and can't even think of outgrowing it."

"I don't see anything *sly* about that noise he made just now!" said the Shanty Kid.

"There you go!" exclaimed Uncle Andy. Then he stopped, and thought for quite a while. But as the Shanty Kid never spoke a word, he soon went on again.

"You see, I was just coming to that. That awful screech is one of the slyest things he does. That fellow has been hunting a while without catching anything. Creeping, creeping on his great furry feet, making no more sound than the shadow of the leaf on the moss; for all his quietness he hasn't had any luck. So, at last, hiding behind a bush, he let out that screech just to start things moving. Did you notice how quick it stopped? Well, he knew if there was any rabbit or partridge asleep near by, it would be so startled it would jump, and make a noise; and then he'd be on it before it could more than get its eyes open. Don't you call that sly?"

The Shanty Kid merely nodded, being resolved not to interrupt.

"Good," said Uncle Andy. "You're improving a lot. Now, let me tell you, the slyest thing of all is the Little Sly One, which Those Who Know Everything call the lynx kitten. The Little Sly One is good enough for us to call her, for she is even slyer when she is a she than when he is a he. Is that quite clear?"

"Of *course!*" exclaimed the Shanty Kid.

"Well, the Little Sly One was a lonely orphan. She had had a mother, and a sister, and two brothers; but a man with a dog and a gun had happened on the mouth of the cave in which they lived. The dog had hastily gone in. There was a terrible noise in the cave all of a sudden; and the dog would have hastily come out again, but for the fact that he was no longer able to come or go anywhere. When the noise had stopped so that he could see in, the man had shot the mother lynx. Then he had shot the dog, because that was the only thing to do. And because he was very sorry and angry about the dog, he also shot the lynx kittens, where they crowded, spitting savagely, at the back

of the cave. But there were only three of them at the back of the cave. The Little Sly One, instead of bothering to spit when there were other things more important to be done, had run up the wall and hidden in a crevice, so still she didn't even let her tail twitch. Of course, like all her family, she didn't really have a tail, but merely a little blunt stub, perhaps two inches long. But that stub could have twitched, and wanted desperately to twitch, only she would not let it. She always seemed to think she had a tail, and if she had had, it would have stuck out so the man could have seen it, the crevice being such a very small one. You see how *sly* she was!

"Of course, the Little Sly One was lonely for the next few days; but she was kept so busy hunting breakfast, and lunches, and dinners, and suppers, that she hadn't time to fret much. She was something like a three-quarters-grown kitten, now, except for her having no tail to speak of, and curious, fierce-looking tufts to her ears, and pale eyes so savage and bright that they seemed as if they could look through a log even if it wasn't hollow.

"Also, her feet were twice as big as a kittens would have been, and her hind-quarters were high and powerful, like a rabbit's. Her soft, bright fur was striped like a tiger's—though by the time she was grown up it would have changed to a light, shadowy, brownish grey, hard to detect in the dim thickets.

"The Little Sly One was *so* sly and so small that she had no difficulty in creeping up on birds and woodmice, to say nothing of grasshoppers, beetles, and crickets. But one day she learnt, to her great annoyance, that she was not the only thing in the woods that could do this creeping up. She had been watching a long time at the door of a woodmouse burrow, under a tree, when suddenly she seemed to feel danger behind her. Without waiting to look round, being so sly, she shot into the air and landed on the trunk of a tree. As she madly clawed up it, the jaws of a leaping fox came together with a snap, just about three inches behind her, just, in fact, where an ordinary tail would have been. So, you see, her tail really saved her life, just by her not having any!

"Well, when she was safely up the tree, of course, she couldn't help spitting and growl-

ing down at the hungry fox, for a minute or two, while he looked up at her with his mouth watering. Then, however, she curled herself up in a crotch and pretended to go to sleep. And then the fox went away, because he didn't know when she would wake up and he didn't want to wait! You see how sly she was!

"But once it happened she was not so sly as she might have been. You see, after all, in spite of her fierce eyes, she was still only a *kitten* of a lynx; and she *had* to play once in a while. At such times she would pounce on a leaf as if it were a mouse, or just tumble all over herself pretending she had a real tail and was trying to catch it. So, of course, when she happened to pass under a low, bushy branch and caught sight of a slim, smooth, black tip of a tail, no bigger than your little finger, hanging down from it, naturally she couldn't resist the temptation. She pranced upon her hind legs and *clawed* that black tip of a tail—clawed it hard!

"The next instant, before she could prance away again, the *other* end of that slim, black tip swung out of the branch and whipped itself round and round her body, and a black

head, with sharp fangs in it, hit her *biff, biff, biff,* on the nose. It was the tail of a black snake she had tried to play with."

"Gee! But she wasn't sly that time!" exclaimed the Shanty Kid, shaking his head wisely.

"The black snake wasn't poisonous, of course," continued Uncle Andy, "but his fangs hurt the Little Sly One's nose, I can tell you. And the worst of it was, how he could squeeze. Those black coils tightened, tightened, till the Little Sly One, who in her first fright had set up a terrific spitting and yowling, found she had no breath to waste on noise. Her ribs felt as if they would crack. But, fortunately for her, her teeth and claws were available for business. She fell to biting, and ripping, and clawing, till the black snake realized it was no Teddy-Bear he had got hold of. For a minute or two he stood it, squeezing harder and harder. Then he wanted to let go.

"And this, I think, was where he made a mistake. As he relaxed his deadly coils and swung his head round, the Little Sly One struck out with both fore-paws at once, and succeeded in catching the hissing, darting

head. She caught it fairly, and her long, knife-sharp claws sank in, holding it like a carpenter's vice. The next minute she had her teeth in the back of the snake's neck, chewing and tearing.

"Now, the snake's tail was still around the branch, so he tried furiously to swing the Little Sly One up and crush her against the branch. But she was too heavy, and too strong. So he came down instead, and thrashed wildly among the leaves, trying to get a new grip on her. It was no use, however. He had made too big a mistake. And the next minute he kind of straightened out. The Little Sly One had bitten through his backbone, just behind the head.

"Well, now, you see, she had a good square meal before her. But, being very sly, she first looked all round to see if any one was coming to dine with her. There was no one in sight; but she knew how curiously things get about sometimes. So she growled, on general principles, grabbed the snake in her teeth, and climbed up the tree so that she might eat in peace.

"The tail was no good to eat, so she bit it off and scornfully let it drop. If that black

snake hadn't had a tail, he would never have been eaten by a kitten-lynx ; so the Little Sly One, as she considered this point, and also thought of the fox, said to herself : 'Well, maybe my tail doesn't amount to much, after all. But there doesn't seem to be any luck in tails anyway.'

"For all that things in general were keeping her so very, very busy, the Little Sly One felt lonely and homesick at times. And especially she felt the need of some kind of a nest which she could call her very own, where she could curl herself up and go to sleep without fear of unpleasant interruptions.

"This sort of thing, as you may imagine, was not to be found every day of the week. Most of such places had owners, and the Little Sly One was not yet big enough and strong enough to turn the owners out. If she *had* been big enough—— Well, you see, she hadn't any more conscience than just enough to get along with comfortably.

"One fine day, soon after her adventure with the black snake, her search for a home of her own brought her out into the warm sunshine of a little, deserted clearing. It was an old lumber-camp, all grown up with

tall grass and flowering weeds. The weeds and grass crowded up around the very threshold of the old, grey log-cabin.

"The Little Sly One stopped short, blinking in the strong light and sniffing cautiously. There was no smell of danger—none whatever; but a scent came to her nose that she thought was quite the nicest scent in the world.

"Where did it come from? Oh, there it was—that bunch of dull-green weeds! Forgetting prudence, forgetting everything, she ran forward and began rolling herself over and over, in ecstasy, in the bed of strong-smelling weeds."

"Catnip!" suggested the Shanty Kid.

"Of course!" agreed Uncle Andy impatiently. "What else *could* it be?

"The Little Sly One had never heard tell of catnip, but she knew right off it was something good for every kind of cat. When she had had *quite* enough of it, she felt kind of light and silly, and not afraid of anything. So, as bold as you please, she marched right up to the cabin.

"The door was shut. She climbed upon the roof. There was an old bark chimney,

with a great hole rotted in its base. She looked in.

"It was pleasantly shadowy inside, with a musty smell, and no sign of danger. She dropped upon a narrow shelf. From the shelf, sniffing, and glancing this way and that, she sprang to a kind of wider shelf close under the eaves.

"That was a bunk, of course, where one of the lumbermen used to sleep, though *she* didn't know *that*. It was full of old, dry hay, very warm and cosy. And the hay, as the Little Sly One observed at once, was full of mice.

"She pounced on one at once, and ate it. Decidedly, this was the place for her. She curled herself up in the warm hay, and went to sleep without fear of any enemies coming to disturb her."

"But what would she do when the lumbermen came back?" demanded the Shanty Kid anxiously.

"By *that* time," answered Uncle Andy, putting away his pipe and rising to go, "she would no longer be the *Little* Sly One! She'd be big enough to take care of herself—and run away as soon as she heard them coming."

The Little Pig that Wouldn't go to Market

I DON'T altogether blame him, of course, for not wanting to go to market," said Uncle Andy. "But whether he was right or whether he was wrong, he *didn't* want to, and he wouldn't go. And because he wouldn't go, some of the queerest things happened to him that ever happened to a pig."

"*Why* wouldn't he go?" demanded the Shanty Kid, who believed it was easier to ask questions than to think.

"Well, now!" protested Uncle Andy. "Of course, *sometimes* they take a little pig to market to put a blue ribbon round his neck and sell him for a pet—*perhaps!* But the Little Pig was very intelligent, and he knew that *that* sort of thing didn't happen every day. He thought he wouldn't take any risks. The old farm was good enough for him.

And if he wasn't going to be allowed to stay there, he thought he'd take his chance in the woods.

"When the Man started out to lead him to market, at first he hung back and squealed with all his might, till he found that, though he could make more noise than the Man, the Man could pull the harder. Then he stopped squealing, so as to think better, and went along as nicely as you please. And the Man became good-natured, and fell to smoking his pipe and whistling, as they trudged along the pleasant forest road between the green bushes and the tall, whispering trees which reached their heads up into the blue.

"The Little Pig looked into the forest, this way and that, out of his shrewd little eyes, and chewed hard on a great idea. Then he chewed hard on the rope, while the Man walked on ahead. And at last the rope dropped apart, and the Little Pig darted off like a white streak into the underbrush. The rope, of course, fell against the Man's legs, and he turned with a remark which was not polite —though the Little Pig didn't care for *that*.

"For a few minutes there was a very pretty race, let me tell you, through the

underbrush, over the fallen branches, this way and that way between the great, mossy trunks. But the Little Pig, who had not yet learnt the bad habit of putting on fat, could go under when the Man, who was large and lazy, had to go over. And he could wriggle through when the Man, making remarks all the time which cost a lot of valuable breath, had to go round. You might know how it came out."

"He got away!" exclaimed the Shanty Kid, licking his lips in his excitement.

"Of course," said Uncle Andy, "or there wouldn't have been any story. And there was nothing for the Man to do but sit down on a stump, and wipe his red face on his sleeve, and say 'Gosh!'—his feelings being too deep for any more polite remarks.

"When the Little Pig was quite out of sight of the Man, he stopped short and listened hard for half-a-minute. The Man certainly was not following. But, as he said to himself, you never can tell what the Man is going to do. So he ran on again, just as hard as ever, for a long time, in order to be quite sure of not going to market *that* day. And at last he came to a brown brook,

flowing very quietly through a little, green, wild meadow full of bees and flowers. Along the edges of the brook the mud was very cool and soft, and the Little Pig, being hot and dusty, at once lay down in it.

"For a time he was too happy to do anything but root, and wallow, and utter little squealing grunts of delight. When at last he grew hungry, he found the sweet tubers of the ground-nuts under the turf along the edges of the bank. Soon the mud which covered him dried in the sun, and then he rolled himself vigorously in the grass till it all came off, leaving him whiter than ever. He decided that the wild meadow was a better place than the old farmyard. He would live here for ever!

"And when he smelt, as he rooted in the grass, something warm and wonderfully sweet, that just seemed to say: 'Come and eat me!' he felt life was really worth living. In a moment he had his nose in a bumble-bees' nest, with the big, yellow-and-black bees swarming all round him in a fury, hitting him 'biff! bing!' and stinging as hard as they could."

"My! How it must have hurt!" ex-

claimed the Shanty Kid, who had memories of his own.

"Oh, he didn't mind *that!*" said Uncle Andy—"not when there was honey going. His hide was extraordinarily thick and tough, you know, and his nose, for all it could smell so sharply, was extraordinarily tough, too. He just screwed his eyes up tight, and chewed away like—oh! like anything. Of course, the inside of his mouth was a bit tender, you know, but as the bees stung him in there he would shake his head and squeal, but keep right on chewing.

"When the honey was all gone, he went away and left the annoying bees. What he wanted now was a snug pig-pen to sleep in. It was getting late in the afternoon, and the world seemed somehow too big for him to sleep right out in it. He looked around, but there was no pig-pen to be seen. He was surprised and disappointed to find that such an otherwise delightful place as the woods should be without a simple necessity like a pig-pen.

"At last, however, away down at the end of the meadow, he found what he thought would do. It was a dark hole—quite like

the little door of his own pen, leading under a big rock, at the foot of a tall pine tree. He poked his head in, sniffed with satisfaction, and paused for his eyes to get used to the gloom. You see, he didn't want to tumble over anything.

"As he stood there, pleased as possible, he saw suddenly a pair of eyes looking at him. They were round eyes, pale, and very bright. They seemed to be very close to the ground, and they stared at him, and stared without winking. The Little Pig began to feel that maybe he was intruding. But, as I have told you, he was not at all shy; and he did want that den. He poked his head in a little farther, trying to make out what the owner of those pale eyes looked like. The eyes seemed to float a little nearer, and a low growl, harsh and savage, came from the dark beneath them.

"The Little Pig didn't quite know what to do. He didn't like to back out, and he didn't like to go any farther in without an invitation. So he sat down on his curly little tail just where he was, in the door, wrinkling his snout amiably, and cocking his head first to one side and then to the other

as he tried to make out *who* it was that was in the cave.

"At last his eyes grew accustomed to the dark, and he made out the shadowy form of a wild cat, crouching in the middle of the floor, still as a stone. The Little Pig snorted. He knew what cats were. There were two at the farm, and they always spat and growled and ran away when he ran at them. To be sure this cat was big, and had very strange, bright eyes. But still—'cats is cats,' said he to himself, never caring a bit about grammar. He would have that den, whether the cat wanted it or not. He marched right in."

"Oh!" said the Shanty Kid.

"You may well say 'Oh!'" responded Uncle Andy. "The Little Pig said lots more than that when a kind of thunderbolt of fur and claws and teeth fell on him, not only knocking him over, but tearing him something dreadful. He was full of grit, however; so he was on his feet in a flash, mad as a hornet, biting and squealing, and trying to trample the cat with his sharp little hooves.

"But that, you see, was where he made a

mistake. The wild cat had not *only* just as many teeth as he had, but also four long sets of terribly handy claws. Oh! how she did use them!

"The Little Pig began to realize his mistake. But he was not beaten—not by any means. Only he did not like it in the cave. 'A fellow hasn't any kind of a fair chance fighting in the dark!' said he to himself; and without thinking of his dignity one bit he went rolling and bouncing out into the sunlight. The wild cat followed, but stopped just outside the mouth of the cave, because the bright light dazzled her at first. She stood there spitting and howling furiously, while the Little Pig, bleeding but undaunted, sat back on his fat haunches, and gazed at her with his twinkling little eyes, uncertain what to do next. He was not afraid, but he felt less enterprizing than at first.

"The cat was not as big as he was, certainly; but she was much bigger than any other cat he had ever seen, and, moreover, she had a way about her which made the Little Pig think perhaps he ought to treat her respectfully. She was all a sort of yellowy, browny, reddish grey, with great,

round, palely-bright eyes, and ears lying flat back on her head, very angry-like, and a most ridiculous stub of a tail that bobbed and jerked, and, as I have remarked before, *such* claws!

"The Little Pig began to feel rather uncomfortable, wondering what to do next; in fact, he rather thought of going away, but didn't altogether like to. While he hesitated, the cat seemed to get used to the bright light, and at the same time she made up her mind. A cat, you know, generally makes up her mind without much difficulty. This one did, without much difficulty for herself, but with a good deal of difficulty for the Little Pig. She came forward. But —the way she came forward, so quick that the Little Pig hadn't more than time to shut his eyes and duck his snout before she was all over him. And she seemed to be *all* claws and teeth, and every claw and every tooth red hot.

"'Oh!' thought the Little Pig, 'it seems to be more uncomfortable out here in the sun than it was in the cave!' And he said it very loud, too, I can tell you.

"Then all at once, somehow, it seemed to come over him that this was no place for

him, so he left, squealing so that it must certainly have interested everything that lived in the forest for miles around. And the cat went with him quite a way; she had grown so sociable. She went on his back, till at last he scraped her off by running under a log. Then she left him; but he went right on, having got so well started that he couldn't think how to stop.

"Now, somehow, though he was too much upset to think much about it himself, the Little Pig's feet seemed to know just where he wanted to go. So sometime along in the night he found himself back at the farm. He squeezed under the gate and ran to the pig-pen. It was shut, of course, but he lay down beside it; and though he was all blood and soreness and stiffness from nose to tail, he was so glad to get home that he hardly cared.

"In the morning the kitchen door opened, and the Man came and looked down at him and grinned.

"'Gosh!' said he, 'ye *must* have been havin' the time of yer life! But since ye've come home, I reckon we'll have to let ye stay!'"

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